

VOL. 270 NO. 2

AUGUST 1992

The Atlantic

A VISIT WITH GEORGE BUSH/HOW TO MAKE CONGRESS WORK BETTER

Tales from the Bazaar

*Whose side, some wonder, are our Arab
experts on? Is that an unfair question?
A report on diplomacy in Araby*

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A dark green Volvo 900 sedan is parked on a paved surface in a forest. The car is shown from the front left side, with its headlight and front wheel visible. The background is filled with large, mature trees with thick trunks and dense green foliage, creating a serene and quiet atmosphere.

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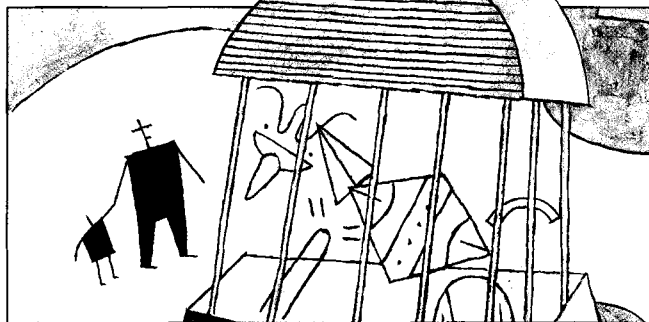
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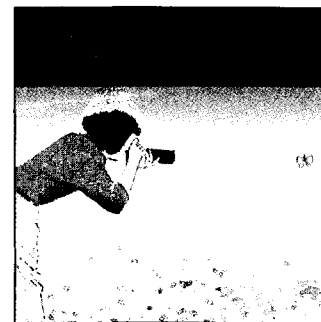
anti-lock brakes and driver's side airbag. Now doesn't that sound nice? The Accord EX.  **HONDA**



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Proposals for the systematic reform of the federal government are not new. Making Congress more like the British Parliament, broadening presidential powers, and instituting term limitation for elected officials—“the panacea of the moment”—are familiar solutions offered by an angry and disillusioned electorate. But they are all bad ideas, the author writes; if they achieved any results at all, it would be at the expense of democracy. He offers a new plan

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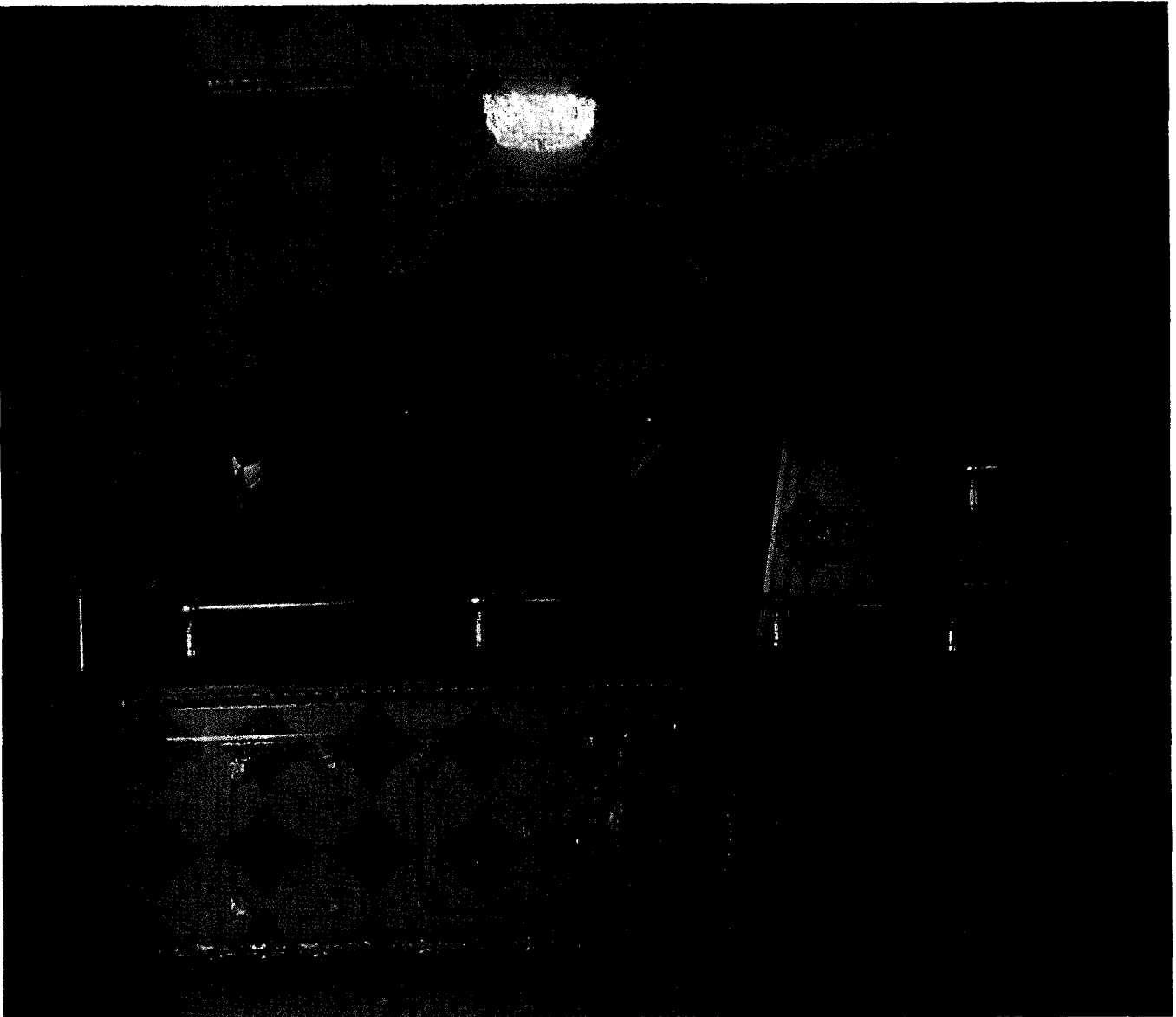
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worse
than dying
is
outliving
your
money.**

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Far more frightening to us, however, is how few people are being told what the future has in store and how to plan for it.

Our purpose in bringing to you the following information isn't to scare you, but merely to help prepare you.

You're probably going to live a lot longer than you think.

Not so long ago, if you were lucky enough to live to retirement age, you'd have very little time left to worry about providing for it.

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To have your birthday announced on NBC's "Today Show," it would help to be 105; there are just too many people celebrating their 100th birthday to mention them all.

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Despite all the dire predictions, we believe Social Security will be around to help you in some form.

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There's one other nasty number that will factor into everybody's future: the rate of inflation. For the period 1967-1990, the average rate of inflation was 6.3%, which dwindled the purchasing power of \$30,000 held uninvested to just \$7,500.

There are also a number of other phenomena to consider that could prove to be a drain on your finances.

For example, in the future it won't be so unusual for your retired parents to still be alive when you retire.

And if, like a lot of other people, you had children late in life, you could be

paying for college at the time people used to save the most for their retirement.

It's not just how much you save, it's how much money your savings earn.

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Your golden years can be truly golden.

At Prudential Securities we don't think you should spend your later life counting loose change. Your objective should be to enjoy retirement, not simply survive it. As such, financial planning is too important to be done by "clipping a coupon" or left to amateurs.

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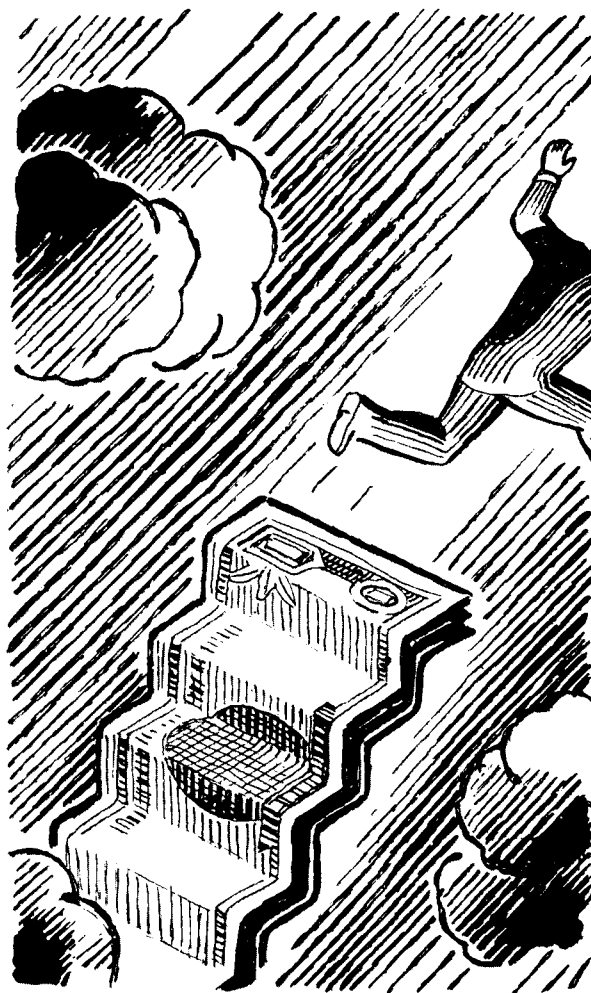
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IT LOOKS AS IF a changing of the guard is in prospect for the House of Representatives this November. Predictions are that more than a hundred new members may be elected, the largest freshman class since 1932. After years when it seemed as if members of Congress could get away with anything, incumbency has suddenly become a curse.

Expectations of a coming renovation of public policy, however, run up against this discouraging fact: those retiring or being turned out are about to be replaced by many candidates who, with our economy, society, and polity in deep crisis, ran on the issue of bad checks. Swapping one set of mediocrities for another won't help us.

So what *will* help? In the short term, one-party government. Every voter who splits his or her ticket in November is voting for more paralysis. Ever since 1986, when the Democrats recaptured the Senate, the country has been adrift. The Democrats have balked such feeble initiatives as President George Bush has sent them, and he has vetoed their bills.

Beyond a more coherent government, we need a more representative government. In the first place, as Michael Lind argues in these pages in "A Radical Plan to Change American Politics," House membership has not been increased since 1910, when our population numbered a hun-

dred and fifty million fewer than it does today. The size of the House needs to grow—perhaps by as many as a hundred members. Second, Lind argues, the entire basis on which congressional districts are apportioned and members elected needs to be changed to narrow the gap between Congress and the country. Today a district that votes 51 percent Democratic and 49 percent Republican goes to the Democrat. Why should the 49 percent be in effect disenfranchised?

Lind outlines a system new to America, proportional representation, that not only would give the 49 percent a voice but also would allow much smaller minorities to send representatives to Congress. He concedes that proportional representation would probably result in the splintering of our current two parties and the creation of new ones. But in a multiparty system, he argues, presidential candidates would be less apt to "run against Congress," because multiparty elections might well be decided in the House of Representatives. By the same token, Presidents would be less likely to adopt the veto strategy through which George Bush has hobbled the government these past four years.

Some may object that the reforms Lind proposes can never happen. Yet the history of this republic is in considerable measure a history of improbable reform. Let us hope that more such history is yet to be written. —THE EDITORS

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



THE END OF SCHOOL

George Leonard's proposals to fix the schools ("The End of School," May *Atlantic*) clearly suggest his belief that the scope and intensity of a cure should match the severity of the symptoms. In truth, there is little at all that is new in Leonard's thinking. The current cohort of college freshmen has grown up with computers. Look-say reading, the new math, classrooms without walls, ten-year-olds doing "research" and "exploratives"—it's all been tried. Even calling one another "citizen," which Leonard finds so charming and presumably heuristic, enjoyed a short-lived popularity some years back in France.

Why all this innovation has not improved learning, and will not, is no mystery. All these activities limit students to "interacting" with the material, the nostrum Leonard sees as prescriptive. But it is oral cultures (lacking reading and writing) that learn by interacting. They perceive and exchange impressions—a world of video bites without the electronics. Leonard sees herein the new education.

Movement in this direction is in fact regressive. Walter Ong (*Orality and Literacy*) hinted darkly that excessive interaction with visuals was leading a sizable fraction of the population into a kind of secondary orality. This is regressive because only literate cultures can deal with metaphor, analogy, and abstraction, abilities we consider indicative of an educated person. Oral cultures find such notions peculiar and uninteresting.

That schools continue to turn out only barely literate graduates is not the result of some great unsolved educational problem. It springs rather from our distaste for doing the difficult, and, indeed, guiding and coaching the young in language use is difficult. It is the lack of energetic and talented coaching, in fact, that allows a student's native propensity for using language to shrivel. The developed mind revels in

the power of language. It is the hard work of helping the student develop this power that we shun. It is easier to let him or her interact with computer screens or do exploratives.

ROBERT N. LEAMNISON
*University of Massachusetts
North Dartmouth, Mass.*

I applaud George Leonard's call for the rapid demise of public schooling as we know it. However, I believe that his reports of its impending death are greatly exaggerated.

I have been a teacher in the California public schools for the past thirteen years, and I must state emphatically that the school that delivers its "product" in the grim, workhouse vision Leonard describes is the rare exception. True, many schools are bad. What Leonard fails to recognize is that many enlightened and courageous educators throughout the nation have made great inroads in creating countless schools of vibrant relevancy. They and the communities they serve would reject Leonard's "baby with the bath water" remedies. They believe that the changes Leonard proposes can be made within the existing school structure.

The recent movement toward school-based management is promising and has resulted in many welcome changes. Leonard tells us that schools force children to learn at the same rate. Nothing could be further from the truth! Vast resources are allocated both in curriculum and in special-education programs in order to encourage students to learn at their own instructional level, regardless of chronological age. Those who rail against what they see as "cookie cutter" classroom environments might find their energies better spent in discovering how teachers can meaningfully individualize their instruction with a student-teacher ratio of 35:1.

Perhaps the greatest absurdity put forth by the author is the notion that students are publicly humiliated for an



The sheep that came home for winter.

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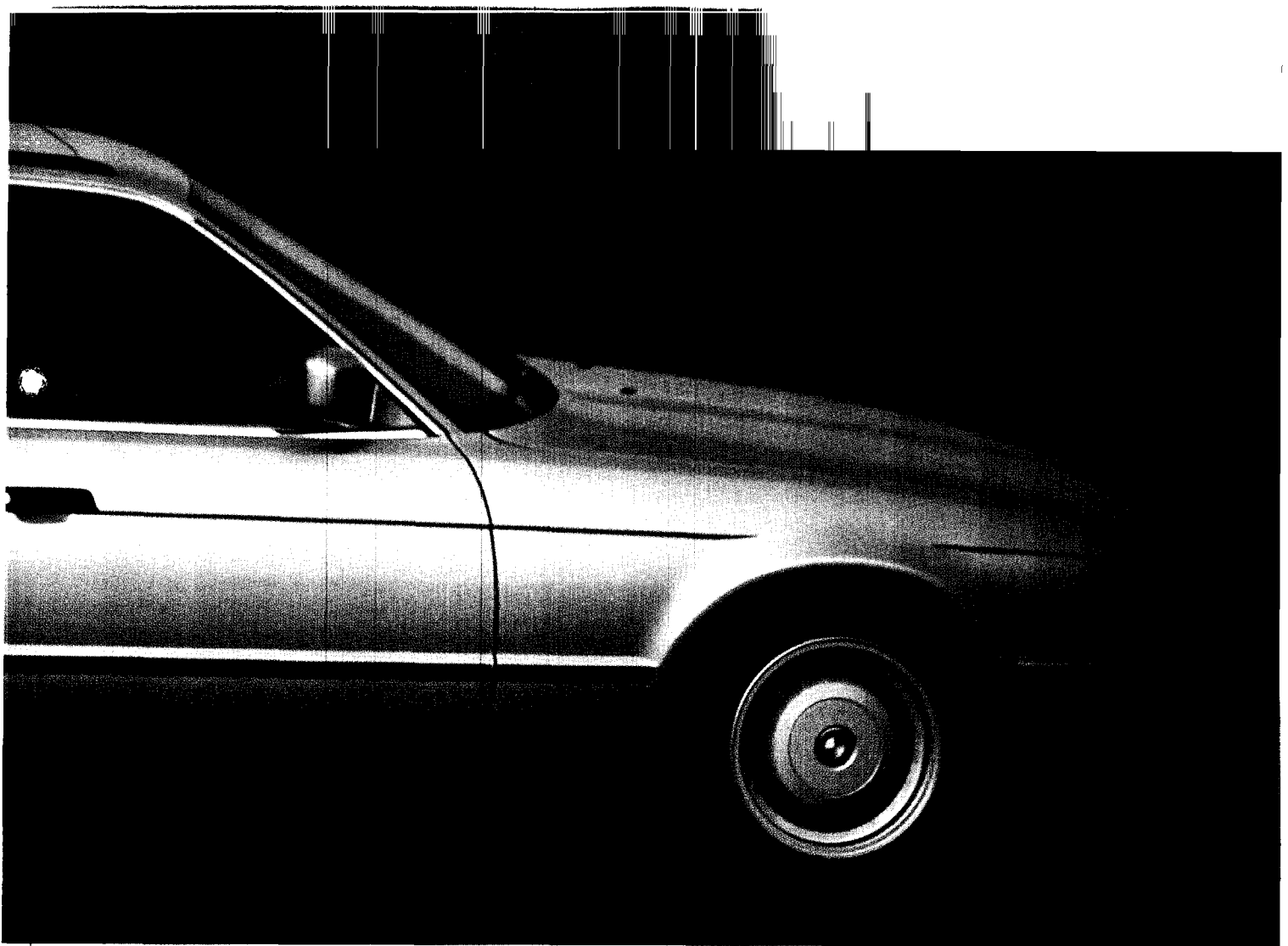


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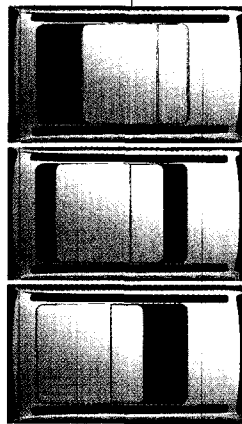
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incorrect response. Ask anyone even remotely connected with a public school what is that school's mission, and you will hear, over and over again, self-esteem. Many of us in the classroom feel, in fact, that perhaps too much emphasis is placed on the preservation of self-esteem at the expense of the traditional process of hard work leading to its own rewards.

JOE PELEJ
Murrieta, Calif.

George Leonard makes some valid points, but he also makes two statements that cannot go unchallenged. He states that people who learn slowly are just as intelligent as those who learn rapidly. Has he redefined the word "intelligence"? My Webster's says it is "ability to learn." Since when has time not been a factor in considering a person's ability to do something? Would Leonard hire a secretary who can type thirty words a minute on the grounds that she is just as good a typist as one who can type sixty? I can play as many notes on my guitar as Segovia. Does that make me his musical equal? Obviously, a person who learns twice as fast can learn twice as much. If that doesn't suggest a difference in learning ability, I don't know what a difference is. Leonard is right that one of the problems of the public schools is that they force all into the same time mold regardless of ability.

And please, spare us the nonsense about five-year-olds mastering communication. An education writer who has no concept of the differences in degrees of mastery of communication among five-year-olds is a charlatan. Some five-year-olds have an extremely good vocabulary and can speak in compound complex sentences. Others can barely make their wants known. To lump them all into one category as a means to prove that all people can learn equally is ridiculous.

BILL BAIRD
Fruita, Colo.

Just when it seemed possible to think seriously about educational reform, back comes George Leonard, peddling the same snake oil that caused so much educational flatulence in the seventies. The fact is that American students are being shortchanged by school days and school years that are far shorter than those of any other developed nation.

This has been well documented and compellingly argued by the "commissions, foundations, task forces, governors' conferences, national and state administrations, and departments of education" he so casually dismisses.

Apart from all the millennial verbiage, Leonard offers only two facts to back his case: One school in Germany is more effective than most in educating German students—but its school day lasts from 8:15 to 4:15. Perhaps also its summer vacation, like those of other German schools, is only six weeks long? And, there is a "metaschool" in Modesto that has lots of computers and calls its students "citizens," but it's "still too early to tell" how it will work.

If Leonard has a case to make, he should make it, and not expect us, fact-free, to pin our hopes on the fantasist George Lucas or on the "true visionary" labor leader Albert Shanker, whose interest in keeping school hours short is obvious.

MARTIN SCHARLEMANN
Santa Barbara, Calif.

The Köln-Holweide remedy is clever indeed. However, I wonder how New York classrooms now fielding a 20:1 ratio, and some California classrooms (30+:1), will find the staff or money to match the 10:1 ratio in Cologne, Germany.

PAUL E. COLLINS
Mahopac, N.Y.

George Leonard replies:

In deploring classroom computers as a threat to literacy, Robert N. Leamnson fails to note that these instruments come equipped with keys for every letter in the alphabet, every numeral, and all the common marks of punctuation. The production of written language with an accuracy, ease, and suppleness previously difficult to achieve makes up perhaps the largest and most significant part of computer-assisted education today. I wish Mr. Leamnson could have been with me during the many days I spent at an experimental eighth-grade class at the Davidson Middle School, in San Rafael, California, run in cooperation with LucasArts Learning. The twenty-seven members of this class traced their places of birth to nine different countries—Vietnam, China, Ethiopia, Korea, Mexico, Haiti, El Salvador, Costa Rica, and the United States. I would have asked Mr. Leamn-

son to have a look at the computer screen of Bethlehem Haile, originally of Ethiopia, who was working on the story of her life in written and graphic form:

It was time for the Haile family head for safety and Sudan. The road to Sudan was dangerous, long, and hard. We could only travel at night and hide in day time because they were Ethiopian soldiers everywhere looking for refugees who were trying to flee the country. The refugees who were found were thrown in prison or killed.

We were lucky to find guide with enough camels to go around. We helped our mother to pack all the food, clothing and water for the journey and so in the dead of night, we set out, all of us on camels.

I trust that Mr. Leamnson can bring himself to excuse a few grammatical glitches in these opening sentences of an electrifying narrative by a young girl who just two and a half years earlier had never heard of a computer or spoken a word of English.

Achieving literacy in America's multicultural future won't be easy, and computers can help. But computers aren't the whole story. Careful readers will recall that the Köln-Holweide school cited in my article could only be called low-tech. What's most needed, however you look at it, is a decisive move away from the teacher-centered, lecture-driven classroom.

Education reform is a subject that stirs strong emotions and elicits deep prejudices—and I don't exempt my own. I appreciate the vehement opinions expressed in the letters printed here and in many others. On one matter the majority of them agree: what we now call school must change.

ONE MAN'S MEAT

Inearly choked with laughter on "One Man's Meat," by John Welter (May *Atlantic*). The last time I was left so helplessly convulsed was at a Bill Cosby performance more than a decade ago, when I attended the University of Iowa.

That my husband and I were then graduate English students at the university undoubtedly contributed to my response to Welter's story. We are consoled to know that at least in fiction

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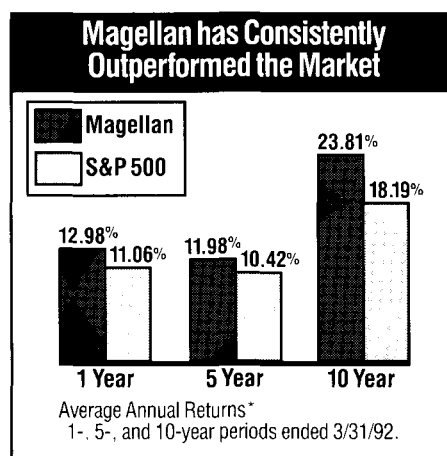
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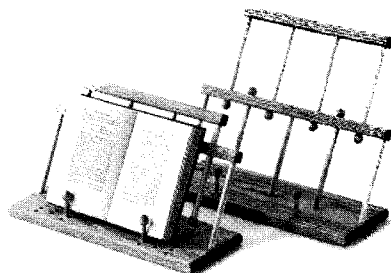


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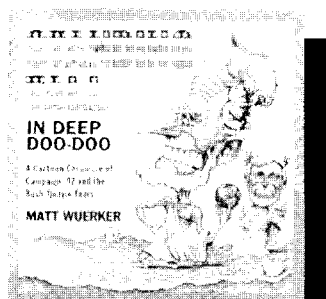
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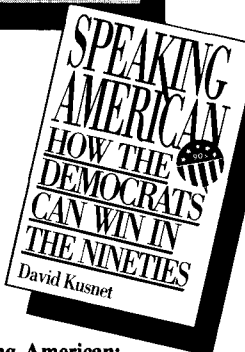
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some English majors have endured career paths even more bizarre than ours.

DEBORAH K. HODGES
Carlisle, Pa.

I appreciate the humor in "One Man's Meat," but I take exception to the implications of the writer. I, too, am a college graduate, but I have the honor to be employed by a company that sells meat from door to door. We do not sell meat from a briefcase, as we are regulated and inspected by the USDA, and therefore store our meat in freezers in the back of our trucks. Door-to-door sales is as old as history and, in fact, the most lucrative sales career in this country. When we open an office, we bring much to a community: a comfortable income for fifteen to twenty employees and their families; a quality product at a savings to our customers; and much-needed tax dollars to the local city, county, and state governments. If you wish to present humor to your readers, please do not degrade a profession that is not only honorable but also, to those who work hard at it, very rewarding.

DOUGLAS WATTS
Premium Marketing, Inc.
Smyrna, Ga.

TROUBLE WITH LEFTIES

In his article "The Trouble With Lefties" (April *Atlantic*), Martin Lasden cites research by the psychologist Stanley Coren, whose claims that lefties have a shorter life-span than their right-handed counterparts received much attention last year.

Coren's methodology is flawed, and his evidence is faulty. He studied a number of deaths rather than mortality rates. Mortality rates are determined by dividing the number of people who die in a given year by the number of people in that age group. Coren's research examined a random group of death certificates and did not relate the deaths to the number living at the same age, as current methodology and actuarial practice dictate.

In the early part of this century people were not "allowed" to be left-handed. Those with inclinations toward left-handedness were forced to use their right hands in writing and most other activities. As a result, most people over the age of seventy are right-handed. Therefore, the older group

studied contained a much lower percentage of left-handed people than the younger group studied.

Let psychologists like Coren study the living, and leave mortality analyses to actuaries.

JAMES J. MURPHY
American Academy of Actuaries
Washington, D.C.

Martin Lasden replies:

James Murphy assumes the best when he suggests that vast numbers of left-handers are alive and well, living as right-handers because of the coercion that they were subjected to as children. However, in defending his own, grimmer view, Stanley Coren points out that if coercion were the main variable, one would expect to see a higher percentage of left-handers today than in earlier, less tolerant times—an expectation that Coren undermines in his book by citing thirty-four studies published from 1911 to 1978. As a group, these studies indicate that the percentage of left-handers has remained fairly constant for nearly seventy years.

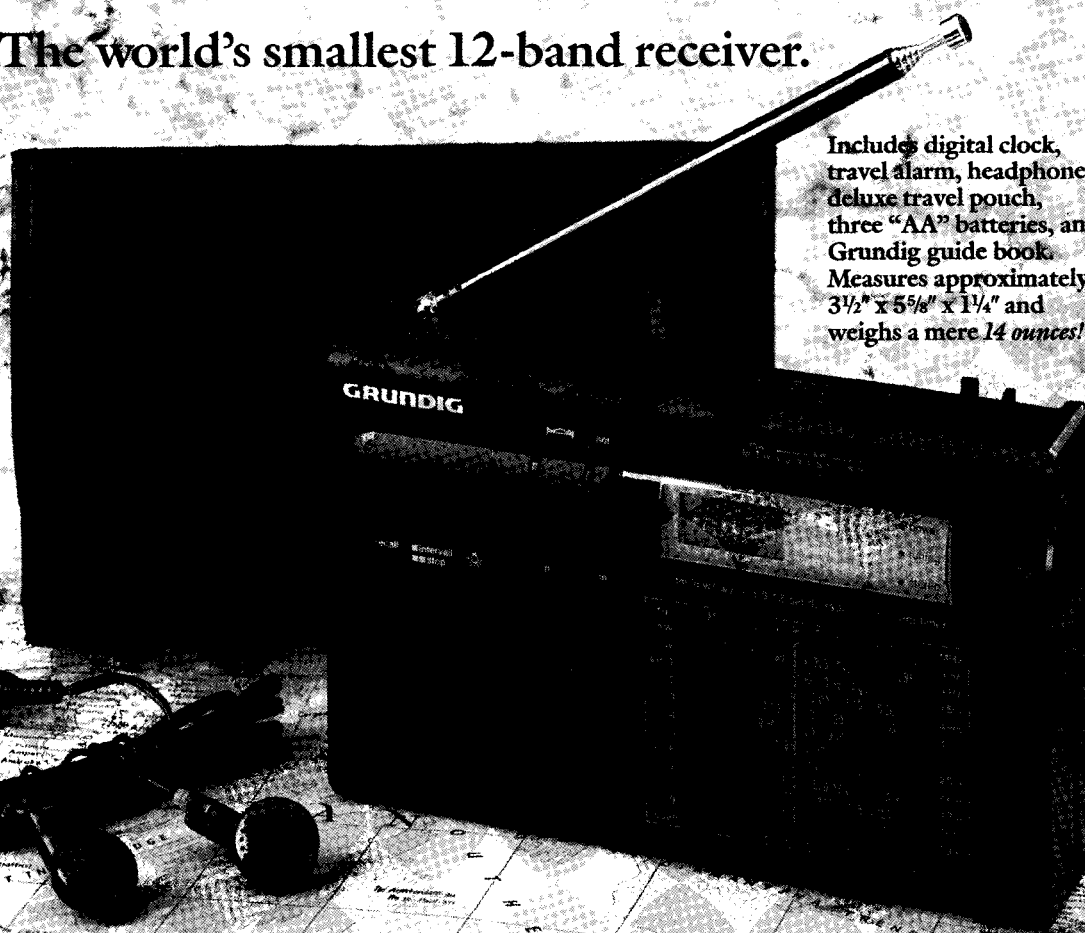
Mr. Murphy also attacks Coren's methodology. Even Coren's critics, though, concede that his statistical methodology is entirely defensible *as long as* no historical variable, like coercion, has contaminated the data. Which brings the argument full circle.

In my own view, Coren does have an interesting case to make: More than a hundred studies show that left-handers are more likely than right-handers to suffer from a wide range of physical and emotional problems—including epilepsy, auto-immune diseases, schizophrenia, and alcoholism. Studies also show that left-handers suffer much higher accident rates. All of which is consistent with the finding that left-handers don't live as long as the rest of us. Still, the case is far from bullet-proof, and perhaps the toughest question Coren faces has more to do with simple logic than with actuarial subtleties: If, in fact, Coren is correct, and there really is an extraordinary ten-year life-expectancy gap between left- and right-handed men, why wasn't it detected before, and why has the finding not yet been replicated?

Coren's longevity study may not be quite as easy to dismiss as Mr. Murphy implies, but until his finding is duplicated by others, there will remain plenty of room for skepticism.

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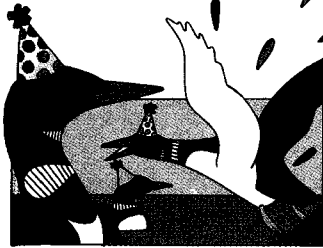
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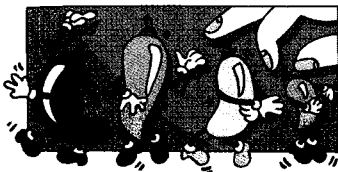


ENVIRONMENT

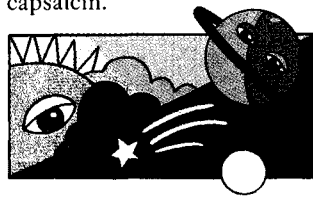
This month visitors to northern lakes may witness what one wildlife expert has called "the loons' last fling." After the season's chicks have become fairly independent and before the birds migrate to their wintering grounds on salt water, common loons often come together in large groups for their most complex social gatherings of the year. Observers might hear yodels, hoots, and tremolos, and might see splash-diving, jerk-swimming, and pelican-posturing. Animal behaviorists believe that the rituals of these gatherings, after the strict territoriality that loons practice during breeding season, help socialize the birds again and prepare them for cooperative fish-catching during the migration. Some of the loons' human admirers will meet August 22-24 in Bar Harbor, Maine, for a conference on loon ecology: because of the birds' sensitivity to pollution, they are interesting both as objects of conservation and as monitors of environmental quality.

FOOD

The nation's largest harvest of chiles (misidentified as relatives of black pepper by Columbus, who nonetheless introduced them to the Old World) is in full swing this month in New Mexico. The influx of Mexican migrant laborers, many of whom commute daily from cities along the border, temporarily inflates the population of some chile-growing towns severalfold. The loom-



ing North American free trade agreement, with its promise of greater competition from south of the Rio Grande—where labor is cheaper and the growing season longer—has made many New Mexican chile growers nervous, and is an impetus for a research project at New Mexico State University aimed at mechanizing the harvest. The biggest challenge is to genetically engineer chile varieties whose ripe fruit will drop off when the plant is shaken by a machine. Capsaicin, the chemical that is responsible for chiles' heat—although not for any of their flavor—is also the active ingredient in a grizzly-bear repellent, in a tear-gas-like spray used by more than 1,200 police departments and by the FBI, and in several topical pain-killers. Chile experts recommend ice cream as the best remedy for a mouth on fire with too strong a dose of capsaicin.

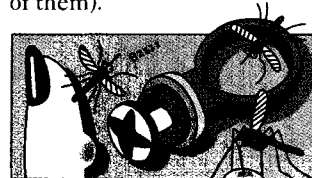


THE SKIES

August 7, Saturn reaches opposition tonight, rising as the Sun sets and setting as the Sun rises. After moonset this weekend look for Perseid meteors. The Perseid shower peaks the night of August 11-12, but by then the nearly full Moon will interfere with evening viewing. Even so, it might be worth watching for a while that night: some astronomers hypothesize that the Perseids' parent comet, as yet undetected, has been approaching, which could explain the spectacular display in 1991. The comet would be even closer now. 13, Full Moon, also known as the Grain, Sturgeon, or Woodcutter's Moon. 22, Venus and Jupiter lie very close together low in the western sky shortly after sunset, in the brightest planetary conjunction of the year.

GOVERNMENT

August 13, the House and Senate recess. 17-20, the Republican National Convention is held in the Houston Astrodome. The convention and preparations for it require that the Houston Astros play 26 away games in a row. No baseball team has endured a longer string of away games since 1944, when the Philadelphia Phillies played 28 consecutive games on the road (and lost 17 of them).



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DEMOGRAPHICS

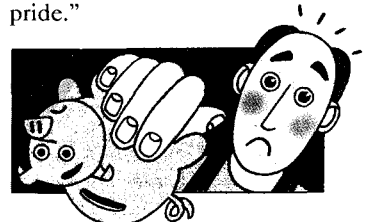
This is the peak month for automobile travel. If past years are any indication, Americans will drive about 200 billion miles this August, which contrasts with the annual low of about 150 billion miles in February. Whatever the season, who all these drivers are, where they are going, how far away it is, and how long they will be there is information of interest to city planners, airlines, automobile manufacturers, insurance and travel agencies, marketing researchers and economics professors, designers of battery systems for electric cars, and even billboard owners, who see a much

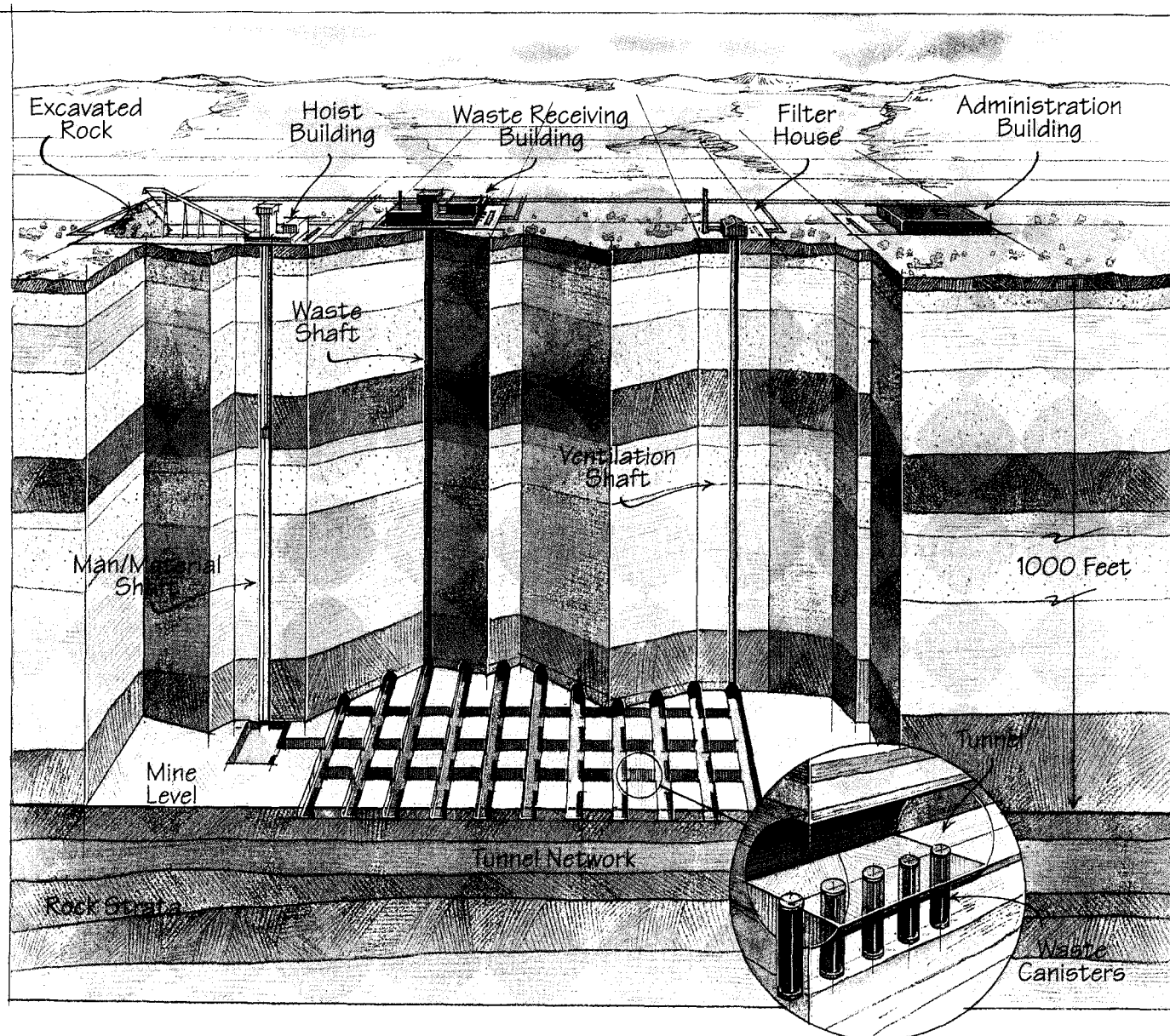


quicker turnover of ads on their signs in the summer. Thus a large and varied audience is awaiting the release next month of the analysis-and-interpretation section of the latest Nationwide Personal Transportation Study, by the U.S. Department of Transportation. The study, which this year is based on information collected in 1990, was last done in 1983, and since then Americans have gotten into the habit of using their cars on longer and more frequent trips. For the first time in our history each U.S. household has, on average, more motorized vehicles than licensed drivers.

75 YEARS AGO

Agnes Repplier, writing in the August, 1917, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*: "We are told that we possess one fourth of the wealth of the world, that we are richer than the British Empire and France combined; that our fortune is close to two hundred billions, and our income approximates thirty-five billions. Yet we rank fifteenth among the nations 'in percentage of savings accounts to population.' Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand save more per capita and more per income than we do. The average savings per capita in Switzerland are \$47.03. The average savings per capita in the United States are \$4.84. What can this mean but weakness in the moral fibre of a nation? There is no power of the soul strong enough to induce thrift but pride."





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feet underground, within dry rock formations that have a long history of geologic stability; and monitored closely.

Also agreeing on the safety and feasibility of this solution are the Environmental Protection Agency and the American Physical Society. For more information on the conclusions of these and other independent authorities, please write to the U.S. Council for Energy Awareness, P.O. Box 66080, Department WA29, Washington, D.C. 20035.

REPORTS & COMMENT

NOTES

Huiswants Es

Words to live by

FIVE TIMES a year the U.S. government's National Endowment for the Humanities publishes a list of which institutions have received how much money for what scholarly purposes. As soon as it arrives, I look first under the heading "Language & Linguistics" to see if any new dictionary-of-dead-language projects have received a green light, or if any of the old dead-language standbys have received extensions of support. Something along those lines is almost always there. For example, the most recent list, which arrived a short time ago, announced new funding for *The Assyrian Dictionary*, a project that scholars at the University of Chicago have been working on since the 1920s. The endowment has also helped to finance work on the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, *The Sumerian Dictionary*, *The Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon*, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*, the *Demotic Egyptian Dictionary*, and *The Hittite Dictionary*, and a dozen more such efforts are under way. At least insofar as scholarly attention is concerned, there

has never been a better time to be a dead language.

Necrolexicography, as the making of dictionaries of dead languages has been good-naturedly called, has always struck me as being about as seductive a scholarly endeavor as can be. It has, to begin with, a certain stodgy romance. It brings the word "lucubration" naturally to mind, with all its pleasing associations: cracked leather bindings, a whiff of tallow under the eaves, a chill cobalt night beyond the leaded panes. The work partakes of a long and venerable tradition, stretching back at least a cen-

tury and a half. It is essential to the study of history. It is also that great rarity, an academic undertaking of distinguished pedigree that is multicultural to its very core, being concerned by definition with diverse peoples. Those peoples, moreover, are usually no longer around to complain. Disputes do arise, but they tend to be over issues that are technical, sort of fun, and unlikely to do major harm to the human race: for example, over whether one can differentiate a distinct Middle Hittite, in addition to Old and New Hittite. Finally, to have one's name associated with the definitive dictionary of a dead language guarantees one a measure of immortality roughly equivalent to that which the dictionary has given the language itself.

Had it been my lot to labor in academe, a career devoted to fashioning a dictionary of Moabite or Philistine would probably have been irresistible. And whenever I come upon the roster of newly funded ventures into dead languages, I feel a momentary pang of opportunity forgone.

THAT IS NO doubt why, after seeing the latest list, I resolved to look into necrolexicography a little further, a search that eventually led to several amiable conversations with Professor Harry Hoffner, at the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute. Hoffner directs the team that since 1976 has been laboring to produce a dictionary of Hittite, a language in which written records dating





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from about 1750 B.C. to about 1200 B.C. exist in the form of cuneiform on clay tablets. The Hittites, as you may remember from high school history or Sunday school, lived in what is now Turkey. Their military prowess was legendary, enhanced, some sources say, by an advanced form of chariot. I have always had a fond regard for the Hittites. They built one of the great ancient civilizations, but their accomplishments, unlike those of other Near Eastern cultures, have yet to be immortalized in English fable and verse. In Byron's poem it is an Assyrian, not a Hittite, who "came down like the wolf on the fold." (As Hoffner reminded me when we spoke, for all their might the Hittites generally preferred diplomacy to force of arms—"and I am not being a Hittite chauvinist," he hastened to add.)

The Chicago project, which aims to produce what Hoffner calls "the OED of Hittite," with many textual citations for every known word, is actually one of two Hittite dictionaries in the making, the other being the product of a German team in Munich. The Munich and Chicago scholars are divided on various issues, mostly having to do with how to date the writing on clay tablets (is there a Middle Hittite, and if so, which texts are written in it?), and so the projects proceed independently. The Munich team started with Hittite words that, when rendered phonetically in Roman script, begin with the letter A. So as not to give the impression that it was ploughing planted ground, the Chicago team, which started its work later, began with the letter L. It has done *M*, *N*, and *P*, and has ahead of it *S*, *T*, *U*, *W*, and *Z* (there is no *O*, *Q*, *V*, *X*, or *Y* in Hittite, and no words begin with *R*), plus, eventually, the front end of the alphabet—*A*, *E*, *H*, *I*, and *K* (there is no *F* or *J* in Hittite; *B* words fall under *P*; *C* and *G* words under *K*; and *D* words under *T*).

Hittite is an important language, and there is a lot of it to work with: some thirty thousand clay tablets or fragments of tablets, most of them from literary archives uncovered at the Hittite capital, Hattusha, beginning in 1906. The language remained undeciphered until 1915, when a Czech Assyriologist, Bedrich Hrozný, showed that Hittite was not a member of the same language family as Assyrian and Babylonian even though it was written in the same cuneiform script. Hittite turned

out to be an Indo-European language, not a Semitic one, and indeed it belongs to the oldest known branch of Indo-European, the language family of which English is a member. Hrozný and others worked out the basics—how the verbs and nouns worked, what the pronouns were—and over the years scholars compiled word lists and glossaries. By the 1970s enough was known to make possible a full-fledged dictionary. The Chicago project was launched by Hoffner and his colleague Hans Gustav Güterbock, who is now eighty-three and continues to be involved in its affairs.

I asked Hoffner if he could explain some of the intricacies of his work. "The Hittites," he said, "are so remote in time and place that there are lots of words whose meanings we still don't know—especially words for things like trees, bushes, fruits, and animals. What sometimes saves us is that in cuneiform the Hittites often made use of Babylonian symbols, which they employed as a kind of shorthand. We often have several copies of the same text—like having several editions of *Alice in Wonderland*, say—where one copy of the text will be entirely in Hittite and another will have all these Babylonian symbols in it in various places. So it works like a Rosetta stone."

By this means Hoffner himself, some ten years ago, discovered the Hittite word for "brother." He had come across the phrase "brothers having the same father," in which the Hittite term for father, *pappa*, was combined with a Babylonian symbol for "brothers." "I just thought I'd look at all the *pappas* on our cards to see which ones had other Hittite elements attached, and I eventually came upon *pappanegnesh*. I tried translating the singular noun *negna-* as 'brother' in other citations we had, and it worked. I made the discovery just in time to include *negna-* in the *N* volume."

Hoffner offered another example of the sort of chance encounter that can lead to a sudden connection. A similarity had long been noticed between two Hittite words—*armizzi*, which means "bridge," and *armizziyah*, which means "to divulge." Morphologically the relatedness seemed indisputable. But how might the two meanings be linked? Professor Güterbock found the probable answer one day when he happened upon this epigram in a Hittite

text: "The tongue is a bridge." There is a lot of wordplay in Hittite texts. Some of it shows up in words for alcoholic beverages. One drink was called *walhi*, a name that seems to be related to the verb meaning "to hit hard." Another drink was called *marnuwan*, a name that seems to be related to the verb meaning "to disappear." Hoffner said, "We've even found a Hittite magic ritual in which, after a patient is given *marnuwan* to drink, the magician uses this verb to command the patient's ills to go away."

Was there anything else Hoffner found particularly fetching about Hittite? "Well," he said, "the word the Hittites used for the verb 'to put on,' as in 'to put on an article of clothing,' was different for each garment." He thought for a moment. "I've also always liked the way the Hittites said hello. The standard form of greeting was *Huis-wants es*, which means 'Be alive.'"

I asked Hoffner how the Hittites said good-bye. He could not tell me. No recovered text, he said, contains a situation in which anyone needs to say it. "Maybe," he added, "as in Hebrew, they just said 'hello' again."

THERE IS something affecting about even a brief encounter with a once-living language. Partly, I suppose, this is because such encounters allow us to see familiar human traits turn up convincingly in strange contexts. Partly, too, it is because they remind us that when these dead languages were spoken, people felt themselves to be living as much in the present as we do now. We may soon be made more aware of the reasons, whatever they are.

I mentioned that there has never been a better time to be a dead language. Sadly, there has also never been a better time to become one. It has been estimated that more than six thousand languages are spoken in the world today. Of these, about half are now spoken by fewer than five thousand people. As many as a thousand languages are classified by linguists as "dying" or "moribund," the helpless victims of cultural engulfment. Some of these languages may have just entered the terminal phase, the chief symptom of which is that they are no longer being taught to children. Others are moments from death, with only a handful of speakers left. Among the worst-hit

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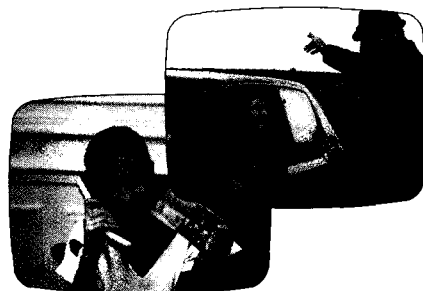
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languages are those of the native peoples of the New World. Klallam and Gros Ventre, for example, are down to fewer than twenty speakers each. Mandan is down to six. Tolowa is down to four or five. Indigenous languages in Australia have also been dying off rapidly. The process is occurring everywhere. In the Caucasus a language called Ubykh, which is renowned for being the language with the most consonants (about eighty), has one remaining speaker.

Some three thousand years elapsed between the death of Hittite and the birth of a Hittite dictionary project. Nowadays, the interval between death and dictionary is typically a small fraction of that length, and the chronology is sometimes even reversed: for today's threatened languages, dictionary projects are desperately coming to life a decade or two before the language's projected demise. A Klallam dictionary has been in the making for some years (and is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities). So has a Gros Ventre dictionary. So have a number of others. Hundreds of languages, of course, are destined simply to disappear, having been committed neither to writing nor to tape. The world's languages are as endangered as the world's species—indeed, in terms of percentage loss, language is in more desperate straits.

For such languages as can be caught, the most likely route to survival is captivity. An extinct language trapped in the amber of a dictionary may be a poignant thing to behold, and yet it enjoys an incomparable advantage over an extinct plant or animal: it has not in fact wholly died. The iguanodon, the Steller's sea cow, the Tasmanian tiger, the dodo—they are gone, never to reappear. But a language, no matter how long in suspended animation, can again partake of life and resume its evolution any time people decide to speak it. I'm not sure whether it was an invitation, but at one point in our conversation Professor Hoffner said, "You know, Hittite is actually easier to learn than Latin or Greek."

Fortunately, the survival of Hittite and other dead languages depends not on me but on the necrolexicographers who quietly tend the embers. I don't know if they have a motto, but *Huis-wants es* would do just fine.

—Cullen Murphy



WASHINGTON

A Visit With George Bush

When asked "Can George Bush think?" his current and former associates all, in effect, say no

"I'D LIKE US still to be the undisputed leader of the world," George Bush told me when I had occasion to ask him recently where he wanted the country to be after a second Bush Administration. Bush credited Ronald Reagan with establishing a "very solid foundation, strong defense—keep our sights set on the demise of the Soviet Union." But he credited himself with confirming America's world leadership through decisive action. "Both Panama and the liberation of Kuwait helped, because I think there was a perception," a "kind of an aftermath of Vietnam, that the U.S. wouldn't fight, wouldn't go all out." We were speaking in the Oval Office last spring. Bush focused on the Gulf War. "I think

Saddam Hussein had that perception. One, I think he thought we wouldn't go to battle and really go all out to do him in. Secondly, he thought that if we did, he might have a way of winning, at least winning like Nasser did," by "emerging as the hero of the Arab world." Bush said, "He was wrong on both counts." Then he gave a typically low-key Bush wrap-up. "Under my presidency I think most would concede that good things have happened."

Wanting to probe one of the good things that had happened, I took up not Desert Storm, which may still be unfinished business, but the collapse of Soviet communism, and asked if the President thought in retrospect that he had been too uncritical of Gorbachev.

He denied it. "I know there's some current kind of conventional wisdom that we stayed with Gorbachev too long. I would say the transition has been peaceful—not without some bumps in the road, but the transition has been peaceful. And the coup failed. And I think that we handled it about right."

So, I continued, it had been correct to say, as late as three weeks before the coup, that *glasnost* and *perestroika* pointed toward "democracy and economic

liberty," which is what Bush had said in his speech in Kiev.

"Look at the alternative," Bush said now. "Look at the people who were trying to overthrow" Gorbachev. People, I pointed out, that Gorbachev himself had appointed. "He didn't appoint them to be coup plotters," Bush said, not to be budged from his basic judgment: the transition was peaceful, the coup failed, therefore what we did must have been right. *Post hoc, ergo propter hoc*.

When Bush talks about foreign policy, he has his examples at hand, and he can present them in a nutshell or tease out their details, as he likes. When surveying domestic issues, Bush tends to cruise at low altitude over a blur of programs, without elaboration, sometimes giving them only numbers, like Chinese slogans, rather than names: "the five objectives we have in terms of reforms . . . our six educational goals. . ." During my interview he alighted on only three issues. In four years he expected to be "well on the way to accomplishing victory" in the war on drugs. He mentioned "encouraging statistics" on the number of teenage users of cocaine, though the number of addicts has "not improved at all," he admitted. "So we've still got a big job." His second issue was the Administration's efforts to contain the litigation explosion—"not a frivolous subject, because when you look at health-care costs," litigation "costs us from twenty billion to forty billion a year." His goal was to "put some caps on these liabilities." Last was regulation, a problem he had partly caused. "We've had two major pieces of legislation that flooded the system with some regulation—the ADA [Americans With Disabilities Act] and the Clean Air Act"—both of which he had supported. "But we're trying very hard to see that we get that under control." In fairness, I should say that we spoke just before the Los Angeles riots. Since then Bush has discovered Jack Kemp's "urban agenda."

When I asked him about multicultural education, an issue not yet attached to any federal programs or national political controversy, he responded with a platitude—"I'd like to see us brought together and not divided"—and then, as he often does, he cited experience. "We have three multicultural grandkids"—the children of Jeb and Columba Bush. "Their mother is Mex-

ican and now an American citizen, proudly. They feel, because of her, affinity for the Mexican culture . . . and it's a wonderful thing. But it is not put forward in their house in some guilt way . . . meaning, the world owes us something because we have a different culture."

Bush also turned to family experience when I questioned him about his position on abortion. His steadfastness on the abortion issue is surprising. Hard-core right-to-life beliefs are not common among those of his station in life. "Friends and others violently disagree with me. . . I hear from more of my friends who disagree. Whether that means that those who agree just are not apt to be checking in, I don't know." Bush had more-liberal views in the 1980 campaign, when he supported federal funding to abort pregnancies that were caused by rape or incest or that endangered the mother's life. But he has held so tenaciously to his new position that the National Right to Life Committee endorsed him in 1988, and is one of the few conservative groups that preferred him to Patrick Buchanan. Bush cited the number of abortions as one of the reasons for his stand; he did not know the figure—1.5 million a year—but called it "extraordinarily high." The other reason was "quite personal": "our adopted grandchildren who give us so much joy." These are the children of Marvin and Margaret Bush. Had their birth mothers exercised the right to choose differently, Bush reasons, they would not be alive.

Bush showed no such steadfastness on taxes. The 1990 budget agreement is the act he most regrets, "because it's cost me a lot of credibility." Indeed it has. The former White House speech writer Peggy Noonan, who wrote the 1988 convention acceptance speech in which Bush pledged "no new taxes," explained in her 1990 memoir why she had preceded that promise with the even more memorable phrase "Read my lips": "It's definite. It's not subject to misinterpretation. It means, I mean this." Noonan may have meant it. But two years later, when Bush turned out to have meant something else, he suffered the first significant sag in his approval ratings and the first signs of rebellion on the right. Reagan, Bush wanted me to know, had raised taxes several times, and yet the opprobrium of pledge-breaking "didn't seem to

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stick" to him. Bush thought that had been partly because the recovery from Reagan's recession in 1982 was vigorous. "With us, we've had this long, slow, recessionary economy. . . . It's been tough. Tough period."

But was the economy the only reason people had become discontented with him, or discontented in general? Toward the end of the interview I asked him if he thought Americans were suffering from a lost sense of commonality, a feeling that we are not in fact all in the same boat. This diagnosis is usually offered by liberals who are bemoaning the class inequities of the Reagan-Bush years, but conservatives make a similar analysis when they criticize cultural secessionism such as multiculturalism.

Bush didn't agree. "If that were true, why after Desert Storm would there have been this enormous coming together? Why would there have been this national pride unmatched since the end of World War Two? Why would that one victory, terrific victory, have pulled this country together in the way that it did, if there was this cancer that you've described? And it was together. And it was strong." So what happened to that feeling? "It was then eroded away by the economic doldrums."

Earlier I had tried another tack. When Bush ran for President in 1980 and 1988, he pointed proudly to his record of public service. Yet this time around he was being challenged by Pat Buchanan and Ross Perot, two people who thought the presidency was an entry-level position. Was the support attracted by such candidates, I asked, a sign of voter disenchantment with the kind of public service that Bush had been providing?

Bush began with a joke: "What's-her-name" (the cult third-party candidate Lenora Fulani) has supporters too. Then, seriously: "I think [people are] disenchanted with the economy. And . . . all kinds of people . . . want to capitalize on that in order to be elected." He acknowledged that there is a broader desire for change—"People are angry and they want to think something can be different"—and offered himself as an agent of change, citing liability limitation, his education package, and "a lot of other reforms" as proof. "It's not all economic. You've got [concerns about] education. You have crime in the neighborhoods. All of this con-

tributes. But," he concluded, "economics contributes the most, because if people think that they have no chance or that their chances are much less, in terms of homeownership or in terms of educating their kids, why, it results in a churning around and a discouragement. . . . And it changes when things [economic circumstances] are different."

So economics was the reason, except when it wasn't, except that even then it was. Bush's diagram of America's pre-occupations resembled a change sandwich—a slab of change between two slices of economic doldrums. Without the doldrums, it seemed, he felt that he would be back at Desert Storm, on top of the world America led—would be, and deserved to be.

GEORGE BUSH has been in public life for twenty-five years, and over that time—indeed, over his entire life—his character has barely changed. "What you see is what you get," says Peter Teeley, his former press secretary. "There is no sleight of hand. He is not a person who is complex." If anything in his presidency surprises us, it is our own fault for not seeing him clearly.

One of the distorting factors has been the offstage presence of Ronald Reagan. Even out of office, Reagan has been like some enormous star that bends the light in which we view his successor. Bush, who feels the absent presence himself, has tried to distinguish himself from it. The phrase "kinder, gentler" implicitly meant "kinder and gentler than Reagan." But, like most attempts at pure positioning without different content, Bush's phrase remained a phrase. Bush's real points of difference from Reagan were woven into his character. They were more fundamental but harder to define.

An aspect of Bush that Bush-watchers still regularly get wrong is his social class. The Bushes, who were rich by anybody's yardstick, were not very rich, like the Kennedys, nor were they old money, like the Roosevelts. This is not a mere sociological curiosity but a clue to Bush's temperament. Though his father, Prescott, was the son of an Ohio steel-castings manufacturer, he worked his way through the managerial ranks from a St. Louis hardware company to a partnership in Brown Brothers, Hariman and Company. Similarly, George

Bush went from college not to Wall Street but to west Texas, to make his nut in the oil business—although much of his capital came from friends and family back east. (In the Oval Office, Bush wanted me to know that he had spent half his adult life "trying to make a living in the private sector.") Bush is not self-made, but neither was he idle—he did some work for his pile. As a result, he lacks the confidence, or the compulsion, to go against the grain.

Almost everything else about him is easy enough to read, though the reading differs with each reader. People who have known and worked with Bush describe him in virtually identical terms, to a striking degree. Where they diverge is in the value they assign to the characteristics they all see.

Everybody who knows him stresses his graciousness, and everybody appreciates it. "If you can't get along with George Bush," Teeley says, "you've got a problem." Bush's handwritten notes—friendly base-touching, thank-you notes, thank-you notes for thank-you notes—have become famous. The fruit of this correspondence can be observed by anyone who has followed him campaigning through the hotel dining rooms and small-city country clubs of America: George Bush seems to know every Republican personally. His thoughtfulness falls with extra weight on those who work for him, and it is repaid with loyalty, even in difficult circumstances. Consider the reactions of the two White House chiefs of staff who were let go during the past twelve years. Donald Regan, who served under Reagan, wrote a book damning him faintly and his wife furiously, and told his tale on the talk shows of America. John Sununu, who served under Bush, campaigned for him in New Hampshire even after Sununu had been extruded from the Administration. The little courtesies rest on a foundation of deeper personal virtues. "Bush was the real Reagan," says Christopher Buckley, an author and a former vice-presidential speech writer. Bush fought in the Second World War, instead of making movies about it; he sees his family regularly, in addition to talking about family values; he goes to church regularly, however uncomfortable he may be talking about God. Buckley, echoing what James Fallows wrote about Jimmy Carter, says, "There is no President I would rather

have sit in judgment over my soul than George Bush."

Bush's manners and morals affect his attitude toward politics. He has an intense desire to win. Another former speech writer, the journalist Victor Gold, remembers prepping him for a televised debate with his Republican challengers in Houston in 1987. "I told him, 'Keep in mind you're the Vice President. You don't have to get down there and slug with them.' Bush said, 'That's good advice, but I'm a competitor.'" Bush got in the sharpest personal dig in the debate, calling the former Delaware governor Pete DuPont "Pierre," as if to say, If you want pots of old money, here's the guy. What Bush

couldn't come up with on his own, he would take from hardball-throwers like Lee Atwater and Roger Ailes.

At the same time, Bush has to overcome a deep reluctance to assert himself in public. His private phrase for self-promoting politicking is "blowing on," and it isn't complimentary. This uneasiness was bred into him by his mother, Dorothy, and it can dog him even at moments of crisis. When Bush announced the start of Desert Storm on television, he was steady and forceful—Bush at his best. The only thing that troubled me was the odd half-smile he wore, until Gold explained to me that it may have been a pre-emptive apology for thrusting himself for-

ward at such a time. Winning and wanting to win are everything; saying so is problematic.

Bush's hesitations and silences might seem charming, even admirable, a kind of WASP reticence, if they did not recall another reluctance of his: the reluctance to define himself, or, indeed, to define anything. No characteristic so divides the fans among his current and former associates from those who have become disenchanted with him—though, once again, they remain unanimous in their descriptions of him. When asked "Can George Bush think?" they all, in effect, say no, the fans explaining that thinking is not what America needs right now and that

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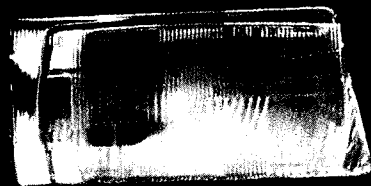


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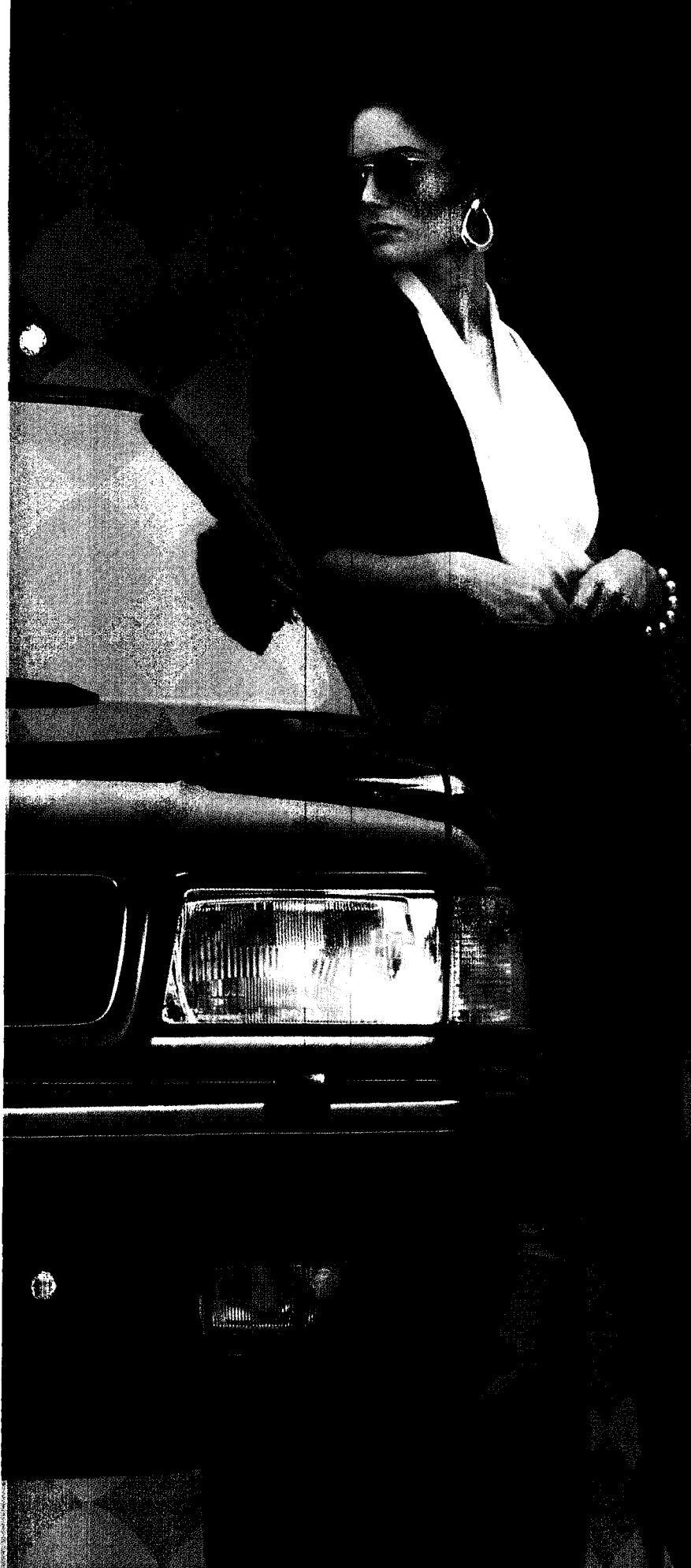
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anyone who tried it would come to grief, the disenchanted believing that the country's problems need some serious thought and that the country will never get it from George Bush.

Chase Untermeyer, the director of The Voice of America, an acquaintance and associate of Bush's for twenty-six years, and definitely a fan, says that Bush "is motivated by the old abiding virtues: patriotism, service, honor; what I didn't say is ideology"—though, he adds, Bush does have principles. What do his principles, and that flag-waving list of terms, mean? Nothing definite. Gold, another fan, says that Bush believes "you're put on earth to accomplish things for the good." Gold continues, "If you asked him 'What is good?' he'd say, 'Well, haven't you read the Bible? Didn't you have a civics teacher?' . . . We do not live in times that require sharp, definitive visions. Most visions our politicians have are garbage. George Bush is dealing with what he has to deal with. His presidency is custodial, because that is what he sees on his desk every day when he gets in. If a crisis comes up, he'll be a crisis President." "Bush would be a splendid vestryman," one former staffer says. "Can he think in an organized, linear way about problems? Can he pose thesis and antithesis, and draw a synthesis? No. He is the least contemplative man I've ever met."

Over the past twelve years Bush's best moments have been moments of crisis. The calm he showed when Reagan was shot was constitutionally and rhetorically correct, and contrasted especially well with Secretary of State Alexander Haig's huffing excitedly (and mistakenly) that he was in charge. When Saddam Hussein vacuumed up Kuwait, it was as if a switch flipped in Bush's brain. He knew what this was: aggression. He knew how to handle aggressors: fight them. He had fought aggressors himself, as a kid out of prep school volunteering to be a Navy pilot. (The Secretary of War had told Bush's graduating class to go on to college; Bush had ignored him.) So Bush told the military to do what it had to do to liberate Kuwait, and he kept Congress and the United Nations in line until it was done.

But before and after crises comes business as usual, which Bush does indeed conduct by dealing with what he finds on his desk every day when he

gets in. (See "The In-Box President," by William Schneider, in the January, 1990, *Atlantic*, for a prescient appraisal of the President's habit of responding to events rather than seeking to shape them.) This may have meant backing Gorbachev until Boris Yeltsin replaced him. It may have meant building up Iraq as a regional counterweight until Saddam Hussein finally crossed the line. After Los Angeles burned, Bush's first extended reaction was a sober speech on the need to restore law and order, which was the thing that most needed to be said at that moment. When he toured Los Angeles, he seemed to feel sincerely the rage and pain of the riot's victims, and he prayed to God to bring "the American family" together (something he had denied the need for doing when we spoke). The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Jack Kemp, was brought forward to push his agenda of urban solutions—school choice, tenant ownership, enterprise zones. Yet Kemp had been in Bush's Cabinet from the beginning. When I interviewed Bush, he saw the need for a "whole new approach" to the problems of poor blacks, but like most of his talk about domestic issues, it was a list of programs—"the things that our Secretary of HUD is talking about." Programs would not have stopped determined hell-raisers, but if Bush had thought about them—if he had put them on his own desk—he might have had them in place, or at least in the arena of discussion, when the crisis happened.

There is something generically post-WASP about Bush's unwillingness to lay out his guiding principles in any way that will actually give him guidance. The historical white Anglo-Saxon Protestant, like Bush, always wanted to be busy, whether getting and spending or doing good. But at moments of upheaval he was capable of thoughts of the highest order. The Gettysburg Address, *The Federalist Papers*, and the Declaration of Independence are all WASP products. Between bursts of brilliance he was guided by a sense that there were "Laws of Nature and of Nature's God," as Jefferson put it. Somewhere along the line, though, WASPdom lost this conviction. The search for villains might start with Emerson, who located God within the soul, and hence converted law to whim. It would

certainly include Woodrow Wilson, that theorist of the Progressive movement, who posted America in the baggage-claim area of history to wait for whatever came out of history's hold. George Bush, who probably hasn't read any Emerson or Wilson since prep school, if he read them there, nevertheless lives in the long shadow they cast on the WASP mind.

Whatever the reason, Bush conducts himself like a man who has a glass ceiling in his head which prevents his great personal virtues from rising to the level of abstraction, or from impinging consistently on public business. He falls back, by default, on experience. If he has had a relevant experience, such as grandchildren or the Second World War, he may know what to do. If not, he is guided by the mood and pressures of the moment. "He is less than the sum of his parts," Buckley told me. Then he paused and added, "Some magnificent parts."

THE LAST question I asked George Bush was "Why should Americans re-elect you?" and the answer he gave was 200-proof Bush. "Because I think I've been a good President in difficult times. I think they know me to be a man of honor and integrity. I think they've seen that our leadership has helped change the world. And I think they'll recognize that my appeal is a good one: Now help me change America for the various things we're talking about here."

He elaborated: "I've tried to serve with a sense of decency. I think people look at that. I think we've tried to talk about family values. We try to live them. We talk about my caring, and I do. And I think those things come through. . . . I think [the American people] say, Hey, these times have been rough, but the President's doing his best, and I disagree with him on this or that, but he's a good man."

Archibald MacLeish wrote, "A poem should not mean/But be." George Bush thinks the same is true of Presidents. Ronald Reagan would have answered my question with two issues—cut taxes, fight the evil empire. Bill Clinton would answer it with thirty-seven issues. George Bush, ultimately, answers it with himself. That is a good answer, as far as it goes. But does it go far enough?

—Richard Brookhiser

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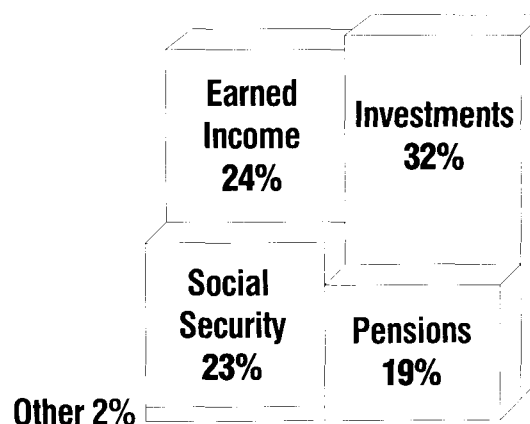
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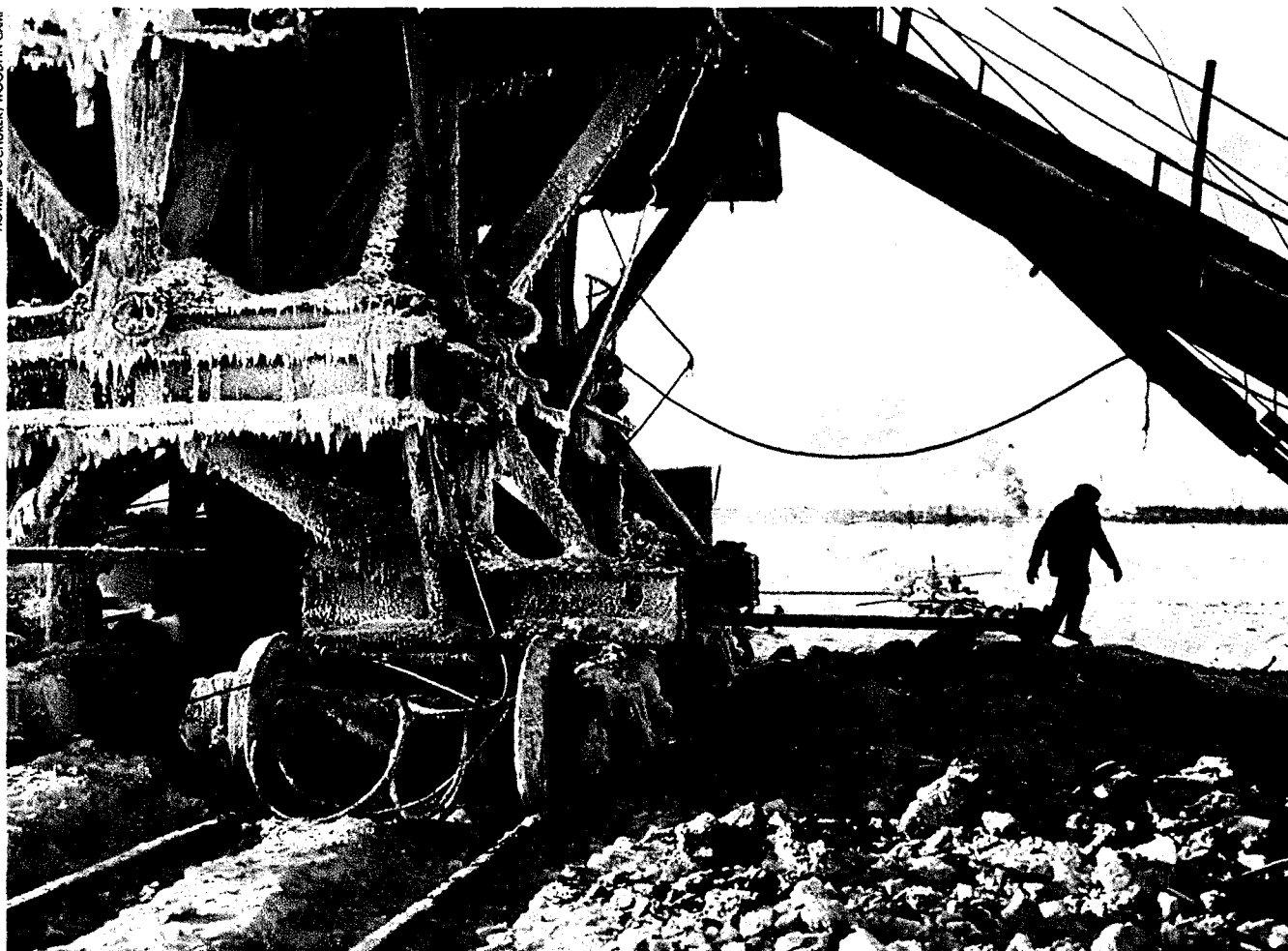
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RUSSIA

Low on Fuel

Russia needs to sell oil abroad to survive, and its ability to do so is rapidly declining

IT IS DIFFICULT to exaggerate the importance of oil to Russia's history and to its future. More than anything else, oil provided the Soviet Union with the means to hold its ungainly empire together and to compete in the arms race. The international oil-price collapse that occurred in 1986, and the Soviet cash-flow crisis that resulted from it, almost certainly figured in Mikhail Gorbachev's decision to begin dismantling the Soviet Union's command economy. For the new Russia, oil is an essential ingredient of economic reform, because oil exports are

the main source of the hard currency that Russia needs to remake its economy. If Russia fails to revitalize its now troubled oil industry, the reform effort is probably doomed.

Russia may have more oil than Saudi Arabia. Combined with its other natural resources, Russia's oil endowment should give the country the same advantages that have propelled U.S. prosperity. That comparison, between Russia and the United States, is a constant refrain among the Western oilmen who have recently traveled to what they believe is the world's last great exploration frontier. Many of them go so far as to say that Russia will surpass the United States economically within fifty years. At this point, however, that prediction seems farfetched. Russia's economy continues to sink, and its oil business is in a state of chaos and decline. Oil production began falling in 1989, and it has dropped by more than 20 percent since then.

Oil was the Soviet Union's largest

source of foreign currency, and it remains that for Russia (which has about 90 percent of what were the Soviet Union's proven reserves). Last year Russia exported almost two million barrels of oil a day to hard-currency customers, which, assuming a price of \$18 a barrel, yielded about \$13 billion. Despite the decrease in production, export earnings have so far remained almost constant, largely because Russia's economic depression has reduced internal consumption. In addition, shipments to ruble-paying customers, such as Ukraine and Belarus, and barter customers, such as Cuba and Bulgaria, have been sharply curtailed. But many analysts who believe that the production decline will continue until at least 1994 say that by then Russia may not produce enough oil both to satisfy its own needs and to export.

A cessation of exports would spell disaster. The very survival of the Russian population depends on annual food and pharmaceutical imports worth



\$15 billion to \$25 billion, according to David C. Roche, a senior international economist at Morgan Stanley & Company. Western governments have agreed to pay for some of that, and they will undoubtedly also pay for the elimination of Russia's nuclear arsenal and perhaps for the rehabilitation of its most dangerous nuclear power plants. However, these things are only the beginning of what Roche believes will be Russia's additional-capital demands for each of the next several years: the oil industry needs \$25 billion to \$45 billion a year for maintenance and modernization; the conversion of the military-dominated industrial base will take \$10 billion to \$20 billion; the modernization of agriculture and food distribution will take \$5 billion to \$10 billion. Beyond that Russia must import some consumer goods and make partial payments on its foreign debt of \$60 billion to \$80 billion. "Oil is Russia's only hope for raising the capital that it must have," Roche says. "If Russia fails to turn around the energy industry, the reform effort will fail and Russia will be stuck in a half-finished revolution."

WHY HAS Russia's most important industry fallen apart? The causes are rooted in the failings of the Soviet Union's centrally planned economy as well as the unbalanced recent steps toward a market system. In the Soviet era directives from the all-powerful Ministry of Oil and Gas took the place of market mechanisms: geologists were told how much in the way of reserves needed to be discovered, forty-two distinct production associations were told how much crude to pump, and refineries were told what fuels to process. The production associations did not know where their oil went, and refiners knew not whence theirs came.

Prices were arbitrarily set at insanely low levels. From 1982 until last year crude oil was priced at twenty-three to sixty rubles a ton, which, assuming an exchange rate of a hundred rubles to the dollar, comes to about three to nine cents a barrel. Even after price adjustments this past May, oil cost less than three dollars a barrel—nowhere near the world market price of \$20. The make-believe prices amounted to an enormous system of subsidies that extended to every sector of the Soviet economy and to Eastern Europe and

PROFILING THE INFLUENTIALS

The 1990s: A very different decade compared with the past four. The disintegration of the Soviet Union, the unification of Europe, the crash of the Tokyo stock market—these major world developments are having a profound impact on American public opinion.

Yet in the midst of such momentous change, many Americans feel that their country is rudderless. And the reason is that many of the leadership groups held up as models in the 1980s have been discredited in the 1990s.

The past decade was an era of conspicuous consumption for elites and aspiration inflation for the rest. Elites held out the promise of economic progress—and failed to deliver for most people. Rather than narrowing, the distance between the "haves" and "have-nots" widened. The gap between leaders and followers has thus grown enormously, because Americans feel their trust has been betrayed. A clear manifestation of this emerging popular backlash is the pervasive anti-leadership, anti-incumbent scent in the air this election year.

As a result, public attention is now turning back to more basic concerns—and toward different kinds of leaders. The elite groups establishing the national agenda of the 1990s bear little resemblance to those that dominated the 1980s. Leading this shift in public attitudes is an organic group of elites—home-grown local leaders in all kinds of communities across the country. And it is a prescient group, whose messages—too often ignored during the frenetic 1980s—are proving to be especially on-target today.

Meet the Influential Americans, the nation's foremost political and social opinion leaders. First identified by Roper in 1945, the Influentials share one fundamental character trait: the propensity to act on their beliefs. They join organizations—and quickly rise to the top of them. They volunteer for a cause—and soon are the center of activity and decision-making. They experiment with a new car, a new cuisine, a new computer—and suddenly, everybody is asking their advice.

Although the Influentials make up only 10 to 12 percent of the population, their impact is far-reaching because of their activism. They are extremely well-informed about most issues, and because they occupy positions of authority in both the private and public sectors, their opinions do make a difference. In the political arena and in the marketplace, they follow new developments and innovations more closely than others—which is why they are typically ahead of other upscale groups in testing new concepts, experimenting with new products and services, and influencing the operations of businesses and governments, both large and small.

In this column, we will report further on who these trendsetting Influentials are, what they want, and why they are important for policymakers and marketers alike. A new 188-page report on the Influential Americans describes this critical group of voters and consumers in detail. If you would like more information about this study, please write or call The Roper Organization.

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farther-flung satellites as well. Although the low prices provided Moscow with leverage over its subject states, they also led to absurd incentives and unfathomable waste.

For instance, in most of the world, producers generally expect to harvest about 30 percent of proven reserves. (For technical reasons the other 70 percent simply can't be pumped out.) But with the Soviet quota system, which offered no rewards for efficiency, wells were so poorly drilled and operated that fields were typically abandoned after only 10 percent of their reserves were extracted. Because many of Russia's biggest fields have already been exploited, and the reopening of abandoned fields is fraught with obstacles, the losses and waste are monumental. Of the oil that was raised, as much as 20 percent ended up literally on the ground, spilled from inadequately maintained pipelines and storage tanks; with low prices, it was cheaper to pump more oil than to fix leaks. The impact of almost-free energy is apparent in just about every aspect of Russian life, from Aeroflot planes that burn fuel twice as fast as their Western equivalents to Moscow apartments so overheated that residents leave their windows open throughout the winter.

Because the production associations did not keep any of the revenues from the selling of oil, low prices did not leave them feeling particularly short-changed; their operations and capital expenditures were funded by Moscow's central treasury. All that changed, however, when Gorbachev, recognizing that the Soviet Union was essentially bankrupt, began to argue that individual components of the economy must become financially self-reliant. The change would have been a boon for oil producers, except that Gorbachev gave them only a tiny share of revenues, and prices remained at artificial levels. Unable to cover their costs, the associations in 1987 began curtailing maintenance programs. This set the stage for the fall in output that began two years later.

Since then Boris Yeltsin's government has grudgingly given the production associations a larger revenue share, and prices have been increased in several relatively small increments. However, the idea of fully unregulated prices remains controversial, to say the least. It is a crucial issue. Low prices

encourage waste and deter investment. Faced with rapidly escalating costs and fixed revenues, the associations may be forced simply to stop producing. When the decision was made to postpone the April price increase, Yegor Gaidar, Russia's economic czar, told *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, "Unless we change this, we simply will not have enough to pay for production. A little longer and the whole sector will come to a halt, and with that the whole economy will collapse."

Many Western economists believe that by failing to act decisively to rescue the oil industry, the Russian government is committing economic suicide. And yet the government has taken some steps to create a market-driven environment. The Soviet Ministry of Oil and Gas is, of course, gone, replaced by the less intrusive Russian Ministry of Fuel and Energy and also the Russian Oil Corporation, a government agency formed to coordinate producers and refiners. Laws governing natural resources are being drafted, and plans are being developed to allow pipelines to be operated as a common-carrier network. Most important, since last January producers and refiners have been permitted to deal directly with one another. As they forge agreements among themselves and with end users, an industry of integrated oil concerns, which would be driven by market forces rather than edicts from Moscow, could emerge.

But the vision is incomplete for the lack of one ingredient, capital, and the overabundance of another, political infighting.

THE CAPITAL requirements are clearly beyond Russia's means. According to David Roche's estimates, Russia needs to spend \$30 billion a year on maintenance alone; he says that it is spending only half that much now. The amount of money required to develop new fields is even greater. At a recent conference in Siberia sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy, Russian officials listed the new fields that they would like to develop in the Tyumen region, one of the most important Siberian production areas. Richard N. Hildahl, a partner in the accounting firm Ernst & Young, who attended the meeting and who advises several international oil companies, says that the amounts of the proposed investments were estimated at more than \$50 billion and that the total for all of Russia could exceed \$130 billion.

There is only one source of money for this kind of investment: the world's largest oil companies. For them, the opportunity to help tap Russia's vast oil reservoirs has fundamental appeal. But although all of them have sent representatives to Russia, and the business press has been full of announcements of their potential ventures, Big Oil has not yet made any major deals. The few investments that have been made are mostly small, short-term attempts to enhance existing production through the use of Western technology.

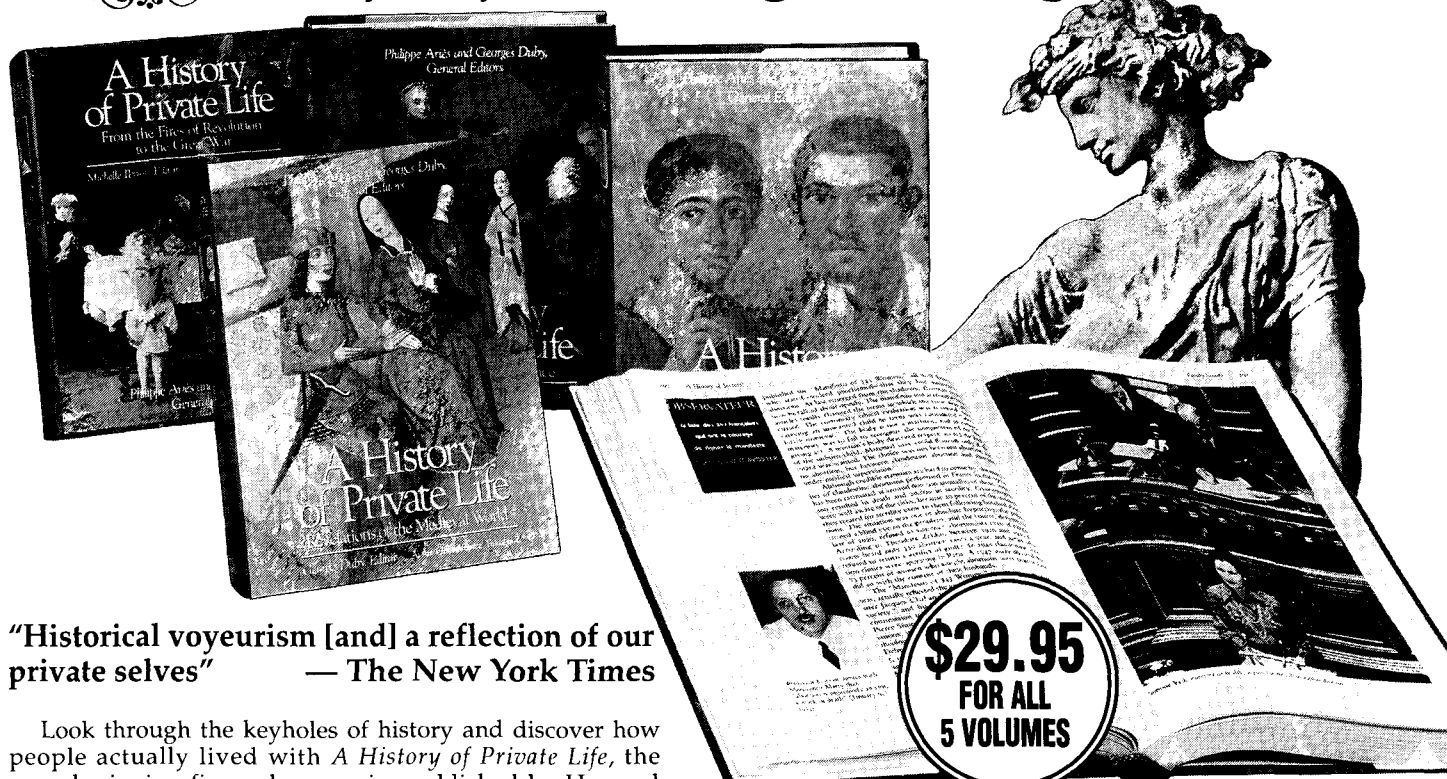
Several multibillion-dollar commitments are needed to revive the oil industry, but few are anticipated. Although oil companies have always been the storm troopers of international commerce, willing to do business in countries that other industries consider far too risky, they must be reasonably confident that their agreements will be honored. In Russia they are not sure that the government will survive or even that the country will stay in one piece. Of Russia's almost twenty autonomous districts, Tatarstan, an oil-rich region near the Volga River, has already voted to secede. The oil companies are also wary of Moscow's constant stream of rule-changing decrees. Moreover, because most of Russia's pipelines to the West pass through Ukraine, Latvia, and Belarus, there is a



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danger that inter-republican disputes could cut off Russian oil exports.

And so, although the oil companies are anxious to explore potential opportunities, they are not about to plunge ahead with commitments worth billions of dollars. One of several oil-company senior executives I spoke to recently said that his company is unlikely to make any major investments in Russia in the next four or five years, though it spent close to \$15 million there last year. Voicing what seems to be the industry consensus, he said, "We wouldn't

has given rise to a bewildering variety of power struggles. The central government wants oil earnings for pressing national needs. The Ministry of Fuel and Energy and the Russian Oil Corporation are united in wanting to retain more oil earnings within the oil sector, but the corporation wants the industry to operate as a single entity under its leadership, and the ministry wants to create a number of independent enterprises. The production associations hope to keep more revenues and operational control in their hands; they also

awarded to those with urgent needs, there are accusations of favoritism and corruption. "It seems to be totally arbitrary," says Alastair J. Harris, the research director of the International Petroleum Exchange of London. "I don't think it's how many times you take Boris Yeltsin out to dinner, but they are political decisions."

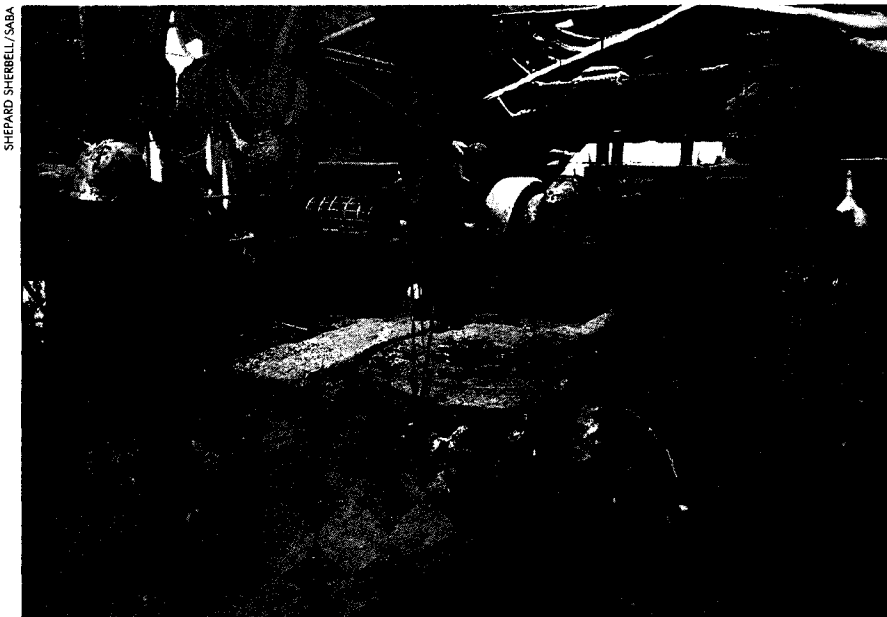
The tug-of-war's impact on Western companies was apparent earlier this year at a meeting of Russian ministers and Western oil executives in London. Peter Thoren, an official of a subsidiary of Salomon, Inc., Phibro Energy Production, which is a partner in the largest Western-financed joint venture, used the forum to complain that a newly imposed tariff would make it impossible for the venture to earn a profit. Ivan Materov, the deputy minister of economy and finance, responded that Russia had no choice: it needed the tax to raise hard currency. However, as soon as Materov finished taking his hard-line position, Vladimir Lopukhin, the Minister of Fuel and Energy at the time, overruled his fellow minister; he told Thoren to be in touch with his office to arrange a compromise.

Even when Western oilmen have succeeded in finding someone who appears to have the authority to make a deal, negotiations have frequently languished because of differing expectations. Whereas the oil companies demand potential returns of at least 25 percent, Russian negotiators have argued that projected returns of about 15 percent are sufficient. Even more fundamental, although the Russians admit their need for Western capital, many of them are not interested in having Western partners.

Acknowledging the dangerous implications of the Russian point of view, a U.S. executive who has made fifteen trips to Russia in the past fourteen months says, "We want twenty-to-thirty-year production deals, and Russians don't see it that way. Some of them are quite direct about it. We would be naive to think that there isn't a real danger that once we got their industry started, they would not have anything to do with us."

It is hardly Russia's intention to keep the oil industry in its present primitive state. But both its actions and its failure to act make that likely to be the consequence.

—G. Bruce Knecht



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be spending that kind of money if we didn't have a dream of someday doing something big, but we are not prepared to make a major investment now. What we are willing to do is to put ten to twenty million dollars into what could be a dry hole; we take that kind of risk all the time."

But he and other Western executives are finding that even small investments are difficult to arrange. First of all, it is hard to identify Russian officials with decision-making authority. "There are a lot of people who can say no, but there is apparently no one person who can say yes," says an executive at one of the major U.S. oil companies. The problem is rooted in a variety of factors: bureaucratic infighting, mismatched expectations, and a fear among Russian officials that any agreements will be criticized as being overly lucrative to foreigners.

The contest over Russia's oil wealth

hope that their operations will ultimately be privatized and that the ownership of their facilities (although not the reserves themselves, which are certain to stay with the government) will go to employees. Local governments are demanding funds to improve the miserable living conditions that are standard in Siberian oil towns.

At the moment, most associations and local governments can keep the proceeds from selling some oil at "market prices." Most associations are allowed to sell three percent of their crude to hard-currency customers and seven percent to the highest-paying ruble customers; most local governments are receiving roughly equivalent proceeds. But individual associations and local governments have different deals, all arrived at politically, a situation that leads to endless maneuvering. Although Russian officials claim that the most favorable terms have been

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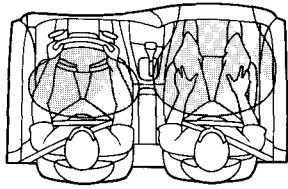
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As individuals, few American diplomats have been as anonymous as the members of the group known as Arabists. And yet as a group, no cadre of diplomats has aroused more suspicion than the Arab experts have. Arabists are frequently accused of romanticism, of having "gone native"—charges brought with a special vehemence as a result of the recent Gulf War and the events leading up to it. Who are the Arabists? Where did they come from? Do they deserve our confidence?

TALES FROM THE BAZAAR

BY ROBERT D. KAPLAN

FOR JACK MCCREARY, IT WAS A MOMENT OF sweet satisfaction. A self-described "child of the sixties," who had spent nearly two decades of his life in the Arab world, McCreary was the U.S. embassy's press and culture officer in Iraq in January of 1988, when the doors of the new American Cultural Center, on Mansour Street in Baghdad, opened for the first time. At last, McCreary thought, there was one place under Saddam Hussein's rule where ordinary Iraqis and Americans could talk to each other in the same room. "The great thing about living for long stretches in an awful country," McCreary said during an evening I spent with him and his wife, Carol, at their home in Virginia, "is that the smallest victory, no matter how pathetic and inconsequential, gives you an incredibly big boost."

Life in Baghdad for the McCrearys and their young daughters, Kate and Joanna, was made up of a number of such boosts. If anyone can squeeze a little water from an ugly regime's monolithic stone, it is McCreary.

After graduating from the University of California at Berkeley in 1968, McCreary entered the Peace Corps, serving in Marrakech, Morocco, where he and Carol met and were married. At the American University of Cairo, McCreary perfected his Arabic. He then joined the U.S. Foreign Service, working as a political officer at American embassies in Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. In Yemen, where I first met him, McCreary was becoming frustrated. Doing his job properly, he felt, ought to mean immersing himself in Arabic with Arabs. "I still marvel at the physical beauty of Arabic script. I'm shocked at people who come to Arab countries and can't read the signs." But Yemen, like Qatar and Saudi Arabia, was politically closed and sterile. Embassy officers were denied regular, official contact with Yemenis. McCreary, who has a "4" rating in Arabic, on a Foreign Service test scale of 5—meaning he speaks and reads Arabic fluently—was meeting nobody except other diplomats. So he

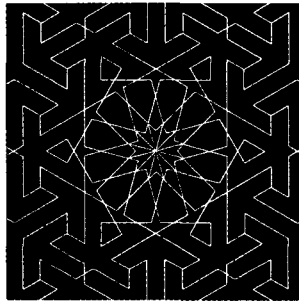
gave up the job of political officer in order to run the embassy's press and culture division. As far as his career was concerned, this was an unorthodox move. But McCreary's life changed. "Suddenly I was with Yemenis all the time."

Hume Horan, a former ambassador to Saudi Arabia and Sudan, observes, "It's the embassy cultural officers who get the real internist's-eye view of a difficult country. They have fewer restrictions placed on their movements. Since Arab writers and artists are in a terrible financial situation and nobody cares about their work, they come cheap: for the price of a meal and a bit of appreciation they'll pour their souls out to you, providing the kind of psychological clues to the workings of a system that a political officer will never get from his Foreign Ministry contacts."

In the summer of 1987, after finishing his assignment in Yemen, McCreary was posted to Iraq. "On a strictly political level, nothing was happening," McCreary explained. "The embassy people knew nobody at the palace. We had no access to the Baath Party. We'd invite Iraqis to receptions and they were too frightened to show

up. For us to claim we knew Baghdad would have been like a Third World diplomat claiming to know Washington because there was one desk officer at the State Department who returned his phone calls. But on the cultural level in Iraq there was tremendous hope."

Western secular culture was a bone that Saddam tossed to his affluent urban subjects. Among other things, Baghdad was the lone Arab capital offering classical piano and violin recitals and a degree program in European music. McCreary's daughters took ballet lessons at an Iraqi government school. McCreary became involved in a jazz club, Al-Ghareeb ("The Stranger"), in downtown Baghdad, where he played the saxophone and Joseph Wilson, the embassy's deputy chief of mission, sang, while McCreary's daughter Kate—along with a crowd of Iraqi artists—made charcoal sketches of the performances. "It was a marvelous place: jazz at night, me playing, Kate and



the Iraqis drawing away. From the point of view of my job, the Iraqis' interest in classical music and jazz was certainly to be encouraged."

The jazz club and his daughters' ballet lessons bought McCreary and his wife rare entrée to the homes of numerous Iraqi families. "It was an artsy crowd of ancien régime types and politically neutered intellectuals. Carol and I worked constantly to give these people a sense of American values, to demonstrate how free people think and behave: to show them *it was possible*. But they were cowed. The big crisis in one family was the teenage daughter, whose beauty had attracted one of Saddam's Takriti goons." (Takrit is Saddam Hussein's birthplace, and that of many of his closest associates.)

The United States Information Agency helped arrange for an American singer, Billy Stephens, to give a concert in Baghdad. Stephens sang "We Shall Overcome" and John Lennon's "Imagine." But when the singer asked the crowd of English-speaking Iraqis to join in, there was silence. "Nobody dared," Carol McCreary remembered.

"But there was such hope, things really were getting better," Carol went on. She described the lifting of internal travel restrictions after the Iran-Iraq War was over, and the end of rationing. The American diplomatic community in Baghdad assumed that there was a thin wedge of opportunity it could exploit, especially after the revolution in Romania. *Maybe it could happen here*. The diplomats all knew it wasn't much of a hope, but it was enough to keep them going.

Jack McCreary said, "Of course, considering all that has happened, this must sound silly to you. I'm embarrassed to talk about it. They were building chemical and nuclear weapons while they let a few diplomats open a library and play in a jazz club. It all seems so stupid and misguided."



Pekinese Orchids

THE MCCREARYS, WHOM A RIGHT-WING OBSERVER might be tempted to ridicule as "liberal, multicultural, Peace Corps types," have in fact tested a canon of neoconservative interventionism—"the export of democracy"—on a deeply personal level under the worst possible conditions, and have the emotional scars to prove it. "The Arab world can be a nasty place," says a key State Department official currently engaged in Middle East diplomacy. "But the Arabist is someone who doesn't have the luxury to theorize from the sidelines. He must actually live there and work solo with this intractable reality."

McCreary and his colleagues are, of course, aware that "Arabist" is among the most loaded words in America's political lexicon. In the Middle Ages an Arabist was a

physician who had studied Arab medicine, which was then more advanced than the kind practiced in Europe. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries an Arabist was a student of the language, history, and culture. With the birth of Israel, in 1947, the word gained another meaning. "It became a pejorative for 'he who intellectually sleeps with Arabs,'" said Richard Murphy, a former assistant secretary of state for Near East affairs, during a recent interview. Murphy's wife, Anne, nodded sadly. "If you call yourself an Arabist," she said, "people may think you're anti-Semitic."

Along with that suspicion come suspicions of "clientitis" and elitism. I was told a story about one U.S. diplomat's wife in Cairo during the 1956 Sinai war who innocently said of the Egyptians, then fighting a British-French-Israeli alliance: "We're so proud of them." The head of a conservative foundation in Washington once lectured me along these lines: "Spanish—because of our intimate contact with the Latin world—connotes a non-elite, drug-lord, 7-Eleven-store culture. Arabic is a distant, difficult, and thus mysterious language, and fluency in it suggests erudite entry to a ruling class where Jews and other ethnic Americans are not welcome."

In the wake of Iraq's August, 1990, invasion of Kuwait, which most Arabists did not anticipate, the term "Arabist" became even more negative. Francis Fukuyama, then a Reagan Administration appointee on the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, and now a consultant for the Rand Corporation, commented after the invasion, "Arabists are more systemically wrong than other area specialists in the Foreign Service. They were always sending cables, and coming into the [Planning Staff] office, saying things about Saddam being a potential moderate that now they're claiming they never said."

The more it gained ascendancy as a term of political abuse, the more indiscriminately "Arabist" came to be applied. During the Gulf crisis the *New York Times* columnist William Safire and the *Washington Post* columnist Jim Hoagland frequently described John Kelly, who was then the assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs, as an Arabist, even though Kelly, with his limited Middle East experience, was distrusted by real Arabists as a politically imposed outsider. By war's end anyone who was vaguely sympathetic toward Arabs was being called an Arabist, even if he or she didn't speak the language and had never lived in the Arab world. I asked a senior Arabic-speaking diplomat at the State Department about the word "Arabist," and he frowned, his chin slumping to his chest, as he muttered, "The word has become poison; nobody uses it around here anymore."

But people do. One reason is sheer convenience. Terms like "Arabic-speaking officers" and "Middle East specialists" are simply too cumbersome. Another reason is prickly pride. "NEA [Near Eastern Affairs] is the best

bureau at State," says one State Department Arab hand. "It attracts the best people because Arabists are always exposed to crises." Another NEA type says, "Any fool can learn Spanish in order to serve in Latin America." "The Eastern Europe people never had a riot on their hands until 1989," says Carleton Coon Jr., a former ambassador with wide experience in the Middle East. "They never had an ambassador killed. Near East hands know what it's like to be shot at and in the media hot seat." The attacks on Arabists notwithstanding, these people are a self-assured breed, for whom the word "Ara-

Though it should stop well short of the role of policeman, the United States clearly needs to maintain a significant presence of some sort.

And yet, even during the hottest moments of recent history in the Middle East, few diplomats have been more anonymous than the Arabists have. With the exception of April Glaspie, the recent U.S. ambassador to Iraq, Arabists are just an opaque "them," even to many of their worst enemies. Arabists, I found, are privately talkative, publicly shy. Like other bureaucrats and civil servants, they don't call attention to themselves. They don't pon-



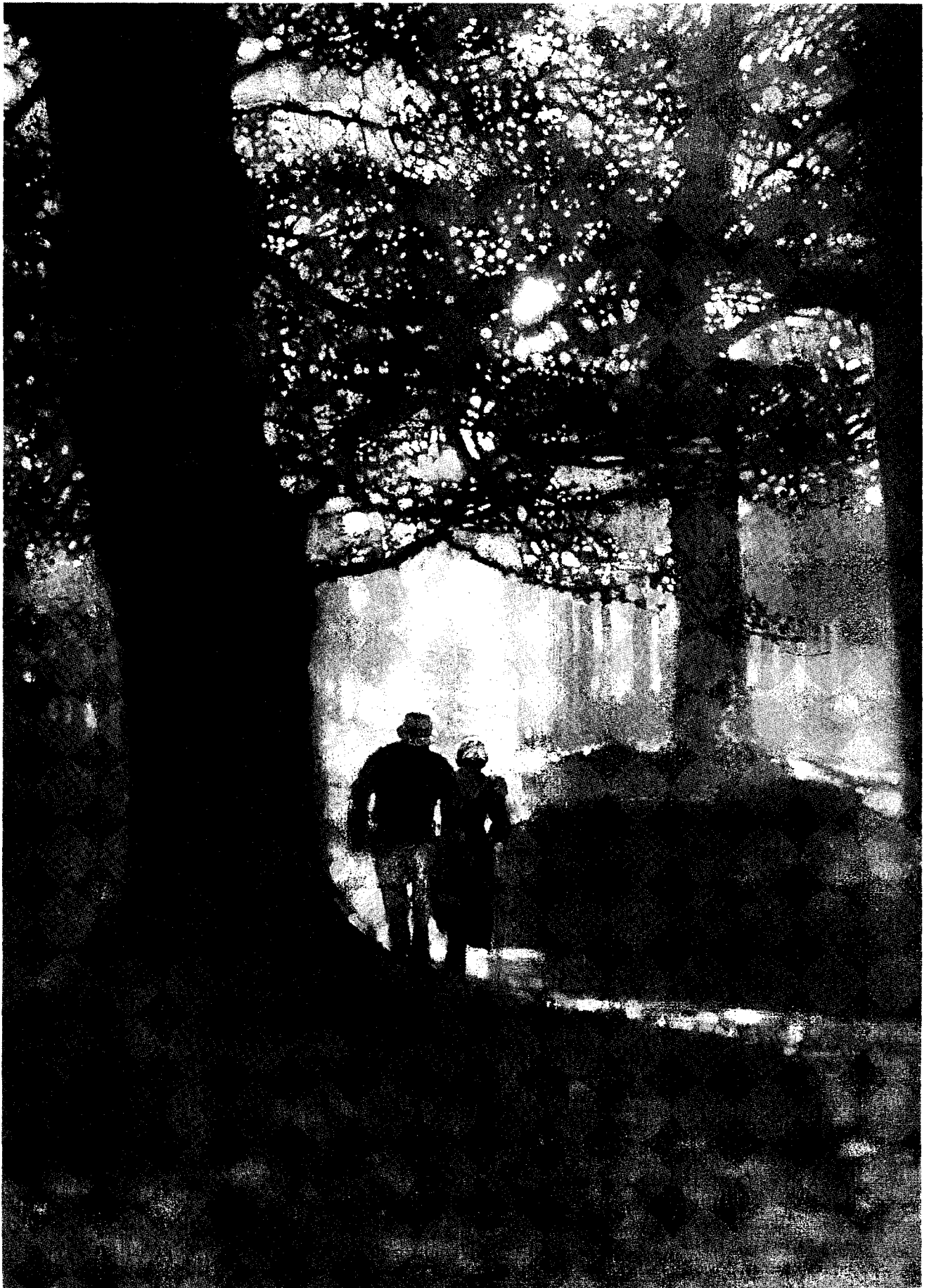
HUME HORAN (IN TIE AT RIGHT) AND AMBASSADOR L. DEAN BROWN, JORDAN, 1970

bist" implies a tight-knit fraternity within the diplomatic corps, united by their ability to speak a "superhard" language and by a vivid, common experience abroad that, as one Arabist told me, "we can't even properly explain to our relatives." "We Arabists," says Hume Horan, in a whimsical, self-mocking tone, "are the Pekinese orchids begot by an American superpower. I suppose only a rich and powerful nation has a justification for us."

Horan knows that that is an overstatement. Arabists, or something like them, would be needed by the United States in the Arab world even if America were to abandon the internationalist assumptions of its foreign policy and its overreaching hopes for a new world order. Leaving the question of Israel aside, American businesses have economic interests in the Middle East worth many billions of dollars. It is important to know what is going on in the region. Then, too, there is the obvious matter of the Middle East's oil, on which much of the world economy depends.

tificate on talk shows or op-ed pages. Peter Rodman, a fellow at the Johns Hopkins Foreign Policy Institute, who ran the Policy Planning Staff in the Reagan Administration, believes that the breadth, depth, and texture of the Arabists' knowledge of the Arab world may work to immobilize their analytical thinking about it.

Buffeted by this and other, more sinister judgments about Arabists, I began an investigation of them warily. In what follows I will describe conversations with people who are or have been among the leading U.S. Arabists. I will look at the origins of the calling in the lives and writings of a handful of adventurers and missionaries. I will examine some of the psychological traits that one encounters among Arabists—traits that may help to explain U.S. diplomacy prior to the debacle in Iraq. Finally, I will describe the emergence in recent years of a newer kind of Arabist, one who is perhaps more suited to an adjusted view of America's role in the world.



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PART I

Past and Present

HUME HORAN SPEAKING: "HERE IS THE DILEMMA: *God spoke Arabic*. Oh, he may have delivered an earlier, flawed message in Hebrew, in the Old Testament, or in Greek, in the New. But he sure got it right the third time. The Koran is not history or biography, like the Bible. It is pure revelation. Arabic is coterminous with God. So, unlike English, which is a compost, a welcoming cathedral, the most catholic of languages, Arabic is a completely closed system, resistant to loanwords, a terrifyingly logical, well-oiled piece of machinery that just clicks, clicks away. Once you've got the infixes and the prefixes in your head, and the three-consonant root verbs, you can construct any word you want. It's like gene-splicing. And the religious etymology is so intense, unlike English, where unless you've studied Greek or Latin, you can't really *feel* the original meaning of the word. Another problem is that Arabic is so beautiful to listen to. So you find yourself putting up with all kinds of crap from these people because of the crystalline way their language lays itself out in space. Just look at the Koran. The English translations are incompetent, I know. The first chapters should really be footnotes at the end: nothing but laundry lists, supplemental legislation—Leviticus. 'The Chapter of the Cow'—*bah*, how dull! But later on, *bang*, the revelations come at you with a muzzle velocity of three thousand feet per second that just knocks you flat on your *can*."

Hume Horan, a boyish and gangly fifty-eight-year-old with close-cropped gray hair, is edging toward his theme, not pausing for breath. He has recently been in a bicycle accident, and is slumped back in his living-room chair, gesturing with his right hand and left crutch. His eyes are drinking light, focusing on some blank sheet of inner space, the kind a physicist might look at.

Arabic, Horan goes on, may be no more insulated a language than Chinese. Chinese, one could argue, is even more inimical to Western thought constructs. The Arabs are desert monotheists. Averse to graven images, they harbor, in T. E. Lawrence's words, a "clearness or hardness of belief, almost mathematical in its limitation." They thus gravitate toward the abstract. Painting, sculpture, and other plastic arts are not Arab fortes. "The medium in which the aesthetic feeling of the Arabs is mainly . . . expressed," wrote Horan's mentor, the Oxford orientalist Sir Hamilton A. R. Gibb (a man fluent in several Near Eastern tongues), "is that of words and language—the most seductive, it may be, and certainly the most unstable and even dangerous of all the arts."

Horan picks up another strand: Islam was revealed in seventh-century Arabia, a world of political anarchy and social degeneracy. "Mohammed—unlike Jesus, whose

mission could assume an ongoing classical order—had to propagate not just a religious message but a social and political one. So Mohammed, in effect, created a supertribe, based not on consanguinity but on a common belief. This social invention proved more practical than Mohammed's political one: his political system broke down with the assassination of the fourth caliph. From then on Arab regimes lacked legitimacy. They had only expediency to fall back on." Alienated from politics and gravitating for linguistic reasons toward the ideal and the abstract, the intellectual energies of the supertribesmen began focusing on religion and on *shari'a* law, "a universe," Horan says, "of splitting hairs and infinite refinements." Politics was ignored, so there are "no legitimizing precedents for political life as it is lived in contemporary nation-states." Socially, Mohammed's message "was progressive in the Middle Ages but not now." So the existence of a supertribe, stirred by the most idealizing and artistic of languages and employing a medieval social code, yet operating in a complete political vacuum—a real Darwinian universe of survival of the fittest—"makes the Middle East a dangerous place not only for Christians and Jews but for all nondominating minorities, even Muslim ones like Kurds and Palestinians."

Horan, who has served the United States in Lebanon, Iraq, Libya, Jordan, Sudan, and Saudi Arabia, is no romantic. He distrusts "the cultural remittance men and international groupies who fill out their personalities in exotic backgrounds." Here are his observations on Libya, where he and his wife, Nancy, lived for several years:

"We're dealing with the traumatization of the disadvantaged: the ultimate vacuity, settled at the last moment by the loser tribes kicked out of Egypt and Tunisia, who were then colonized by the Italians—rulers as nasty as they come. In World War Two, battles raged back and forth across the desert and the rape is complete. Afterward, it is the poorest country in the world, its biggest export scrap metal from the war. Then, *bang*, instant wealth and a coup that brings a true believer to the fore. The wealth goes to their heads, and of course they hate everybody."

Horan's maternal great-grandfather was a U.S. diplomat during the Lincoln Administration. The poet Stephen Vincent Benet was a distant cousin. And his father was Abdollah Entenzan, a Foreign Minister under the late Shah of Iran. His parents divorced, and Horan grew up with his mother and stepfather, who was a journalist and businessman, in Argentina. He returned to the United States to attend private boarding schools and Harvard, but should not be dismissed as merely the product of a good education. His fluency in French and German is self-taught. Hopping around his library, he pulls a German novel off the shelf with his crutch, turning the pages with it, proudly showing me his old vocabulary lists. He is a jumping jack of energy and meticulousity. Holed up for two weeks in the bullet-riddled U.S. embassy in Amman,

Even during the hottest moments of recent history in the Middle East, few diplomats have been more anonymous than the Arabists have. They are just an opaque "them," even to many of their worst enemies.

during King Hussein's 1970 civil war with the Palestinians, Horan was limited to a quart of drinking water a day, of which he denied himself enough to shave and wash the collar and cuffs of his shirt. In Lebanon, Horan spent his nights translating an Arab novel. In Libya he audited courses in *shari'a* law at an Islamic university. In Washington he studied biblical Hebrew in order "to read Amos, my favorite prophet, in the original" and to "understand Israelis as Israelis, to know them through their own language, a language of boulders tumbling down mountains—*wow, no wonder they can be so tough.*" Horan races on, his eyes swimming with enthusiasm and deep sensitivity. If only he had one more life.

Horan is the Foreign Service's equivalent of a Tal-mudist. "He's the real thing, a scholar-Arabist in the classic Bernard Lewis mold," says a former White House official who has rarely had a good word for Foreign Service officers. "When we do our job perfectly," says John Collier, of the Foreign Service Institute's School of Area Studies, "the result is a Hume Horan." Horan is as much revered inside the State Department as he is obscure outside it. A staple of diplomatic lore is the fact that he completed a twenty-one-month advanced Arabic course in twelve months, emerging with the highest language rating ever awarded to a Foreign Service Arabist.

A BOOK PUBLISHED IN 1837 BY JOHN LLOYD STEPHENS—*Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and the Holy Land*—helped fire Horan's enthusiasm for his field. Stephens, a New York lawyer, later achieved fame as an explorer of Mayan ruins in Mexico. But he was also among America's first Arabists. Dressed in native garb and armed with guns he flew the American flag over his boat on a trip up the Nile.

"Stephens was a true Jacksonian," Horan says. "Early America's spirit breathes throughout his narrative." Horan cites the author's populist enthusiasm for both Arab and Jew in the Holy Land, his hatred of Turkish despotism and recognition of the suffering of African slaves, his interest in the practical improvements recently made in plague-ridden Alexandria, and his complete lack of paternalism and condescension. Horan was particularly taken with Stephens's determination to confront a desert sheikh who tried to cheat him.

I assured [the sheikh] that . . . I did not believe there was a worse Arab in all his tribe than himself; and finally, throwing open my trunk, I told him that I did not fear him or all his tribe . . . and added, turning my pis-

tols in my belt, that they should not get it while I could defend it.

Keep cool is a good maxim, generally, in a man's walk through life, and it is particularly useful with the Bedouins in the desert; but there are times when it is good to be in a passion, and this was one of them.

Horan, too, has found that when dealing with Middle Easterners there are times when it is good to be in a passion. In late 1984 Horan, as ambassador to Sudan, played a key role in smuggling thousands of Ethiopian Jews, known as *falasha*, through Sudan to Israel with the tacit help of the Sudanese government. After the U.S. embassy's role in the rescue operation became public knowledge in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, there was hell to pay. Horan was accused in the local papers of being an enemy agent, and anti-American sentiment grew in intensity. Horan found himself living with several Sudanese bodyguards in his ambassadorial residence. But he decided not to play it "cool and low-key."

"At every reception I attended in Khartoum I told people I was proud of what we had done, and that they should be proud too. I told the Sudanese government that the departure of a few thousand hungry people was not going to alter the correlation of forces between the Arab world and Israel. I had found an issue to meet people head on with—so they knew that the United States stood for something."

Horan's habit of standing up for principles, combined with the treacherous nature of Middle East politics, eventually derailed his Foreign Service career. Saudi Arabia is more than America's principal strategic and financial ally in the Arab world. Its uncompromising desert is where the foundation stones of Bedouin culture and Islam were laid. For a State Department Arabist, therefore, no position is more exalted than the ambassador's post in Riyadh. In late 1987 Horan was just settling into this job when he and his staff, assisted by national intelligence findings, began to solve the latest riddle of the sands. In the desert south of Riyadh, Washington learned, Chinese technicians were installing medium-range ballistic missiles, easily capable of reaching Israel. The Saudis had secretly broken an understanding with Washington, and Horan was instructed to make clear to King Fahd just how distressed the United States was. Horan delivered a formal protest in writing to the King. The shamed King made it clear that Horan was no longer a viable interlocutor. Horan was recalled to Washington. He later was elected president of the American Foreign Service Association.

"Hume Horan and I belong to an elite club," says Richard B. Parker, a sixty-nine-year-old former ambassador to Lebanon, Algeria, and Morocco, "the Awhab Shubak—'Arabists Who Have Been Shit Upon by Arab Kings.'" (Parker's tough reporting on Morocco caused King Hassan to demand his recall.)

A feeling persists within the Foreign Service community that Horan was done in not just by the Saudis and their powerful friends in Washington but also by senior bureaucrats within the State Department, for being too perfect an area specialist—that is to say, for understanding the Saudis better than they wanted to be understood. Horan brushes these suspicions aside. "There is a Kleenex quality to ambassadors. We're policy instruments, not policy-makers, there to take the blame, to be wiped away so the process can continue." That brings Horan to the subject of his fellow Arabist ambassadors. Making an arc in the air with his finger, he says, "You can plot Arabists on a curve, starting with the old hands and ending with the new generation. But I like to think that the top of the curve is my generation."

By his generation he means those who combined the intense interest in Arab culture and literature evinced by the old-timers with the cool and skeptical objectivity of the newer analysts. The origins of the profession lie deep in the nineteenth century, and Arabists today are marked by some of the qualities of their distant forebears. Their forebears influence as well which parts of the Arab world are deemed to be of central importance—and that, in and of itself, can be something of a trap.



An Atavistic Relationship

TALCOTT SEELYE'S HOME, MORE SO THAN HUME Horan's, holds the material effects of a lifetime spent in the Arab world: Oriental carpets, miniature paintings, lithographs of the Holy Land, old books about the Middle East. I remember what another Arabist told me about his colleagues' affection for exotic carpets: "Rugs are a form of nomadic fur-

niture that a Foreign Service officer can carry around the world and that creates its own intimate space."

"I want to write about Arabists," I begin. Seelye, a lanky and balding seventy-year-old, smiles and answers with a question: "Have you read *The Wilder Shores of Love*?"

The Wilder Shores of Love, by Lesley Blanch, is a book about four Victorian women who, as Horan would say, "fill out their personalities in exotic backgrounds," accepting something that, Blanch wrote, "was vanishing



TALCOTT SEELYE AT THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE, TUNISIA, 1973 . . .

from the West, something to which they were all subconsciously drawn." The book continues, "Repose: the Eastern climate of contemplation, of *Kif*, of nothingness, brought to its quintessential state of voluptuous, animal stillness was a state wholly alien to the West." Seelye is no escapist. But despite a sometimes stormy career that has brought him into head-on clashes with supporters of Israel, among others, Seelye seems to have reached his own state of *Kif*, and is at any rate willing to display a soft spot for romance.

Seelye's grandfather and great-grandfather were both Congregationalist missionaries who spent their entire adult lives in the Middle East. They were part of an insufficiently studied chapter in U.S. history which saw Americans, mostly New Englanders, fly the Stars and Stripes over mission outposts in remote regions of Mesopotamia, Kurdistan, Syria, and Iran as early as 1820—a time when the American West was still waiting to be settled. William Frederick Williams, Seelye's great-grandfather, was part of a missionary group that saved the life of Rabbi Sholoem of Mosul in 1853, after Muslim offi-

cials had arrested the rabbi on trumped-up charges. His grandfather, William Nesbitt Chambers, was an eyewitness to the Armenian holocaust and wrote a poignant memoir about it. Seelye's father, Laurens, was a professor at the American University of Beirut, in the city where Seelye was born.

As a youth, Seelye returned to the New England of his ancestors and attended Deerfield Academy and Amherst College. After military service in Iran during the Second World War, Seelye joined the Foreign Service. Following

Later, when he was ambassador to Syria, Seelye's cables to the State Department's Policy Planning Staff—so seemingly understanding of Syria's actions—would cause Francis Fukuyama to scrawl in the margins, "Talcott Seelye is the Syrian Ambassador to Washington, not the American Ambassador to Syria." In 1981, upon his retirement from the Foreign Service, Seelye called reporters into his office in Damascus to disparage the Camp David accords and to call on the United States immediately to open a dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Seelye insists on making a few things clear. "My boyhood in Lebanon was two thousand percent American. I resisted learning Arabic and had to learn it like any other Foreign Service officer. I had mixed feelings about serving in Germany after the war, on account of what the Nazis did to the Jews. I went into Arab affairs only because there were too many German-speaking officers and the Middle East was opening up as a career. But given my family history, I suppose my relationship with the Arabs is atavistic. In America we've lost the attribute of the extended family, while the Arabs have this in spades."



... AND AT AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE, SYRIA, 1980

a tour of duty in Germany, in 1952, he switched to the Near East bureau, where he remained for the next twenty-nine years, generally going from one embassy job in the Arab world to another, ending with ambassadorships in Tunisia and Syria. Seelye's daughter is continuing the family tradition: not long after graduating from Amherst she moved to Jordan to teach, and subsequently she went to work as a staff aide to Queen Noor.

Seelye talks easily about the time in October of 1973 when, as ambassador to Tunisia, he sent Secretary of State Henry Kissinger a cable advising him not to send arms for Israel's defense after the surprise attack by Egypt and Syria. He was, of course, ignored. Yet Kissinger was well enough aware of Seelye's skill as a hands-on Arabist to trust him to go to Lebanon as a special emissary in 1976, after the assassination of U.S. Ambassador Francis Meloy Jr. Though Seelye was criticized for utilizing PLO security men, he did manage to effect a low-key evacuation of U.S. diplomats and their families from war-torn Beirut. "I used the PLO simply because they controlled the area we had to pass through," he explains.

Despite the tenor of some of the high points in Seelye's career, he would probably describe himself as holding a perfectly balanced view of the Arab-Israeli conflict. He has visited Israel at least nine times. "Israel," he says, "is one of our highest priorities in the Middle East. But it's a matter of where we go from there." That there exists a mutual suspicion between many Arabists and friends of Israel is as hard to deny as it is easy to understand. Seelye recalls the time when he and a group of Arabists from the State Department were invited to a Jewish fund-raising dinner. "At the end of the evening, though, we [the Arabists] were all back at the same table alone together. I guess they felt uncomfortable with us and perhaps we with them. It was sort of a shame."

Seelye says he does not keep up with current literature about the Middle East. He goes back to "the old books," particularly George Antonius's *The Arab Awakening*, published in 1938, "a seminal book that had an impact like no other." *The Arab Awakening* is commonly regarded as the first book about the struggle between Jews and Arabs told from an Arab point of view. But its real significance, some

would say, lies slightly afield. Antonius, a Christian Arab, was anti-British but poignantly pro-American, describing U.S. missionaries as the “foster-parents” of modern Arab nationalism. Seelye admits that this characterization is somewhat of an exaggeration. Yet it is a story that requires telling if the roots of his—and the older generation of Arabists’—tortured attitude toward Israel are to be properly understood.

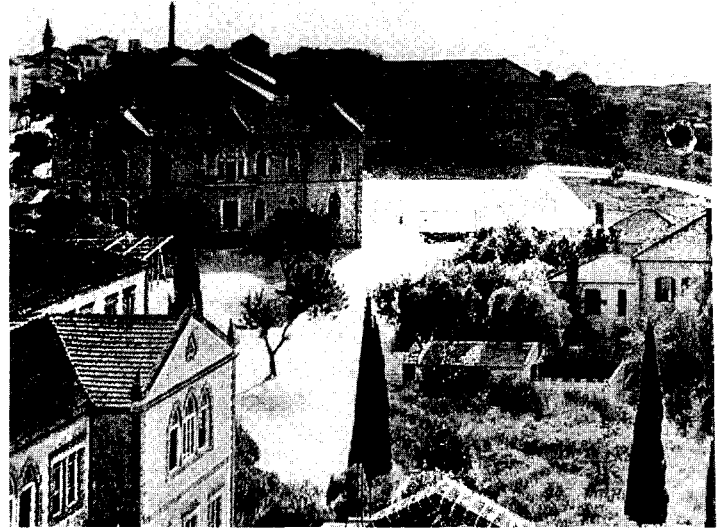
AS SEELYE EXPLAINS, WHEN HIS MISSIONARY FOREBears came to the Middle East, in the early nineteenth century, they quickly realized that the Muslim Arabs were not about to be converted to Christianity. But the missionaries discovered that they had something else to sell, which the Arabs did want: Western education. By 1860 American missionaries were operating thirty-three schools in the Middle East. In 1866 came their crowning achievement—the opening of the Syrian Protestant College, in Beirut, with a Vermonter, the Reverend Daniel Bliss, as its president. The school would later evolve into the American University of Beirut, commonly known as the AUB.

Whatever official monuments there may be, in truth there has never been a greater monument to Woodrow Wilson’s vision of liberal internationalism—and the difficulties such a vision faces in the real world—than the AUB. Here we were in the sunny Levant, educating those less fortunate others who upon graduation were assuming leadership roles in their own new nations, carved out of a dying European imperialist order of which we were entirely innocent. And not only were we openly loved for this activity, but as a very consequence we were garnering political influence without having to dirty our hands in realpolitik. “We basked in being disinterested good guys,” recalls Arthur Close, who comes from a Beirut missionary family. In 1945, at the charter meeting of the United Nations, there were more AUB graduates among the representatives than graduates of any other university. Eliahu Elath, a former president of the Hebrew University, and other members of the liberal Jewish intelligentsia in pre-Israeli Palestine were also AUB alumni. Daniel Bliss’s stirring vision had indeed become a reality:

A man white, black or yellow; Christian, Jew, Mohammedan or heathen, may enter and enjoy all the advantages of this institution . . . and go out believing in one God, or in many Gods, or in no God. But it will be impossible for any one to continue with us long without knowing what we believe to be the truth and our reasons for that belief.

However, in the wake of the Second World War came the creation of Israel and the beginning of the superpower rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, with its corresponding turf battle in the Middle East. The old-time Arabists knew that with the vote on

THE AUB ARCHIVES

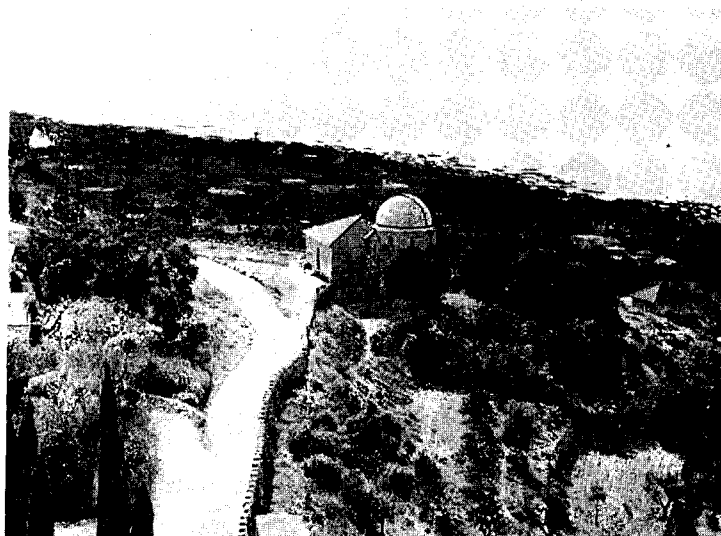


THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

partition going against the Arab world, and with the United States sworn to uphold Israel, the days of a beloved American presence and an easy American influence were over. “In some of their minds,” Carleton Coon says, “Israel spoiled it all.”

In the 1950s, according to Terry Prothro, who was a psychology professor at the AUB from 1951 through the mid-1980s, the university “became a place where the Arab student body tried out all their political responses” to the challenge posed by Israel. Some of the American faculty openly sympathized. In an essay recalling those heady days, the late AUB president Malcolm Kerr wrote of “heroes,” such as “Faisal I of Iraq and Nasser”; “villains,” including David Ben-Gurion; “revered texts,” among them *The Arab Awakening*; and “the problems of the Arab-Western relationship,” including “the usurpation of Palestine by Zionists.” Young Arabists could hardly have been unaffected by this climate. Prior to the start of the Lebanese civil war, in 1975, the Foreign Service field school for Arabic instruction was in Beirut (it’s now in Tunis), and many an old Near East hand has idyllic memories of pre-war Lebanon and AUB friendships. Seelye told me that as a junior Foreign Service officer in Jordan in the 1950s, he’d had a special relationship with the Jordanian cabinet because “half of its members were ex-students of my father at the AUB.” Horan observes that the AUB finally emerged as “the translation of a religious and educational calling into a political one.”

The Vietnam War further radicalized the campus: students and faculty members saw America’s support of Israel as an extension of its mistakes in Southeast Asia. Israel’s capture of Arab lands in the Six-Day War of 1967, Prothro recalls, sparked the creation of a “pro-Arab, pro-Palestinian group made up largely of AUB people,”



BEIRUT AS IT APPEARED AROUND 1900

called Americans for Justice in the Middle East. But campus radicals in the United States were never mugged by reality the way those at the AUB were: the onset of civil war in Lebanon made the faculty and student complaints of the 1950s and 1960s seem laughable. In the end, as the war dragged on and Western hostages were taken, and after Malcolm Kerr himself was murdered by Muslim extremists, “there was no politics among the Americans anymore on campus,” Prothro says. “Staying alive was the only thing that mattered.”

The violent, drawn-out decline of the AUB was, for those of Seelye’s generation, symbolic of a wider catastrophe. It marked the destruction of what the Protestant missionaries had lovingly helped to build over the course of a hundred and fifty years: an Arab political renaissance founded on American values that, as fate would have it, collided in the night with another idea grounded in Western liberalism—the birth of a Jewish state in Palestine.

SEELYE’S VIEWS REGARDING Israel may grow out of this collision. He belongs to a post-Second World War breed of U.S. diplomat that Peter Rodman, a longtime associate of Henry Kissinger’s, labels “aggrieved area experts.” This breed is perhaps best understood through the career of the late Loy Henderson. Henderson, along with George F.

Kennan and Charles Bohlen, was a Kremlinologist whose reports from Moscow before and during the Second World War painted an extremely gloomy picture of Soviet life and Stalin’s long-range intentions—a picture that ran counter to the rosy image of the Soviet Union entertained by many Americans back then. As a consequence, Henderson was ejected from the Soviet bureau at State. He wound up in the division for Near Eastern and African affairs, where he rose to become director at the time of Israel’s creation—something he was dead set against. Henderson perceived Israel as an oil-less impediment to good relations with the oil-rich Arab world at a time when the United States was entering a long, difficult struggle with the Soviet Union. This was not anti-Semitism but just a cold-blooded exposition of what Henderson saw as U.S. interests. It happened to be a sentiment that fit snugly with the life experiences of Arabists of Seelye’s generation. Older Arabists like to compare themselves to the Kennan-Bohlen-Henderson school of Kremlinologists. They argue that whereas those Soviet experts of yore were victimized for daring to report the negative aspects of the Russian reality, Arabists are victimized for daring to report the positive aspects of the Arab one.

A case in point: When Anwar Sadat came to power in Egypt, in 1970, Michael Sterner, one of Seelye’s Arabist colleagues with experience in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Egypt, predicted that, as Sterner told me in an interview, “the new guy will not be a facsimile of Nasser but will take things in a different direction”—a point of view that at the time was criticized by the Israeli government and many of its U.S. supporters. Sterner, whose opinion was based on a personal relationship with Sadat, continues to regret that neither the Israelis in the early 1970s, prior to the Yom Kippur War, nor, at first, the Nixon Administra-

tion trusted Sadat’s overtures. He showed me a montage from a 1971 edition of the Israeli newspaper *Ha’aretz* (*The Land*), depicting himself, Murphy, and a handful of other State Department Arabists in Lawrence of Arabia costumes. “This is how the Israelis ridiculed us,” he said with a laugh.

“But there really was lots of localitis back then,” recalls Richard Parker, who was a contemporary of Seelye’s and Sterner’s. Parker admits that he refused an opportunity in the 1960s to learn Hebrew and serve in Israel, “because it might have had an adverse effect on my career as an Arabist.” Parker is studying Hebrew now, however—in retirement.



THE AUB’S FIRST GRADUATING CLASS, 1870

Iraq and Syria: A Romance

THOUGH THE AMERICAN PUBLIC TENDS TO VIEW the radical states of Iraq and Syria with disdain, these two ancient lands represent the historical, literary, and linguistic core area of an Arabist's life work. "Syria is the apogee of Arabism," Horan says, "because the Syrians have everybody else's number and nobody has theirs. I always regret that I never got to serve in Syria. Syrian Arabic is the Arabic I most enjoy listening to. Iraqi Arabic, on the other hand, is less aesthetically pleasing, because it has a heavy admixture of Kurdish, Persian, and Turkish." This linguistic fact, however, is evidence of a different allure: Iraq, in addition to being an Arab urban center second only to Egypt in importance, is home to the Fertile Crescent's richest overlay of civilizations. For these reasons, Horan observes, Arabists exhibit "a certain weakness, a *faiblesse*," for Syria and Iraq.

This *faiblesse* merges with the Arabists' grasp of the modern histories of the two radical states, which is the result of reading, often in Arabic, and of actually living in Damascus and Baghdad. "Syria sees itself as the most mutilated descendant of the Ottoman Empire," says Richard Murphy, who became America's first ambassador to Syria after President Richard Nixon re-established relations in 1974. Indeed, when the great British Arabist Charles M. Doughty traveled in the Middle East in the 1870s, the region was divided into only two parts: the limestone plateau of the north, called Syria, and all the rest—a sandstone desert stretching south to Yemen—called Arabia. Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, and the Turkish salient of Alexandretta were then all part of Syria, and each was taken away. Murphy explains that whereas most Americans see Syria only as a brutal regime of anti-Western peasant Alawites, Arabists have lived in Damascus, where the Sunni population is urban and instinctively pro-Western. Gene Cretz, who was an embassy political officer in Damascus in the late 1980s, recalls, "Syrians are sophisticated and

quite at ease with Westerners, at least on a personal basis. I don't mean to sound Pollyanna-ish, but I never had a bad day in Syria. Dealing with my Syrian friends and acquaintances was as natural as breathing."

Whereas Syria is a bastard child of the Ottoman Empire, Iraq is the Arabists' very own Frankenstein creation. It was jerry-built by the British out of the forlorn Ottoman *vilayets* ("provinces") of Kurdish Mosul, Sunni Baghdad, and Shi'ite Basra, for reasons both base and altruistic: first, to have an oil-rich foothold at the head of the Gulf to

buttress British India; and second, in the words of the linguist, archaeologist, explorer-traveler, and diplomat Gertrude Bell, to "make it a centre of Arab civilisation and prosperity."

IRAQ BECAME THE EXPERIMENTAL plaything for a band of British scholars—*cum*—imperial agents. They included a personage as well known as Lawrence of Arabia and ones as obscure as the Oxford don George Margo-liouth. Their eloquence led H.V.F. Winstone, a biographer of Bell's, to wonder whether "the world might have been a more peaceful place for future generations if they and their like had not been such able and persuasive writers." Bell was the dominant figure of the group. "I read all of her books," says William Eagle-

ton, who was the top U.S. envoy to Iraq in the early 1980s. "I rate her very high." Wealthy, well-connected, and passionate about the Orient, Bell once exclaimed, "When we had made Mesopotamia a model Arab state there was not an Arab of Syria and Palestine who wouldn't want to be part of it."

Bell, the most influential British official in Iraq, never did go back to Britain. She retired to a house in Baghdad and was referred to as Umm al-Mumminin ("Mother of the Faithful"). "I am an Iraqi," she declared. Before she died, she admitted that though the arguments she had used to promote Iraq were political and economic ones, the "keynote" of Iraq "is *romance*" (her emphasis).

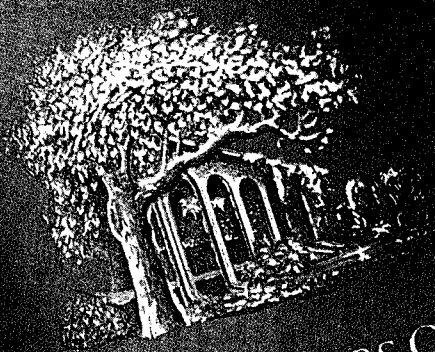
Bell was soon followed at the British embassy in Baghdad by another prominent Arabist, Freya Stark, for whom Eagleton has much less enthusiasm. Stark combined a gift for romantic travel writing with one for wrong-headed



MICHAEL STERNER (CENTER) WITH ANWAR SADAT, 1971...

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The old-time Arabists knew that with the vote on partition going against the Arab world, the days of a beloved American presence were over. "In some of their minds," Carleton Coon says, "Israel spoiled it all."

tions. There will no doubt be many revelations. It is unlikely, however, that any of them will alter the general picture of what occurred: a policy of support for Saddam Hussein during his war with Iran led, after the war, to a policy of coddling and drift. Why did this occur? What role, if any, did the Arabists play?

The answer is not a simple one, but I will lay out some of the elements. First, for a long time—indeed, during most of the period when Iraq was actively at war with Iran—the Arabists had very little say in U.S. policy toward Iraq. Washington did, however, have a well-defined policy of helping the one thuggish regime against the other thuggish regime, which was openly and viciously anti-American. That policy may have been imperfect and cynical, but it made some sort of sense and it was a policy.

A second element is the following: Arabists by and large were comfortable with this policy anyway, for reasons, as we shall see, that have everything to do with the history and psychology of their profession.

A third element is this: When the Iran-Iraq war ended, U.S. policy entered a period of ambiguity. Washington had no clear aims with respect to Iraq, except to permit various financial and military interests in this country to do business with Saddam Hussein. Secretary of State James Baker, moreover, was increasingly preoccupied with German reunification and getting Arab-Israeli peace talks under way. This was the time when Arabists might usefully have sounded a warning—a warning at the very least to disengage. Instead, conditioned by their past and by their training, and by their perception of Iraq as the Arab country of the future, they pushed to maintain the status quo: a measure of engagement, a measure of appeasement.

WILLIAM EAGLETON IS CALLED BY HIS FORMER colleague Richard Murphy “the last of the great pashas” in the State Department. “Bill always had time for another trip to the *souk* or into the Kurdish mountains, which he thoroughly enjoyed. He loved getting away from Washington and into the field, which is not a bad thing.” Marisa Lino, the U.S. consul-general in Florence, who served with Eagleton in both Iraq and Syria, explains that there are two kinds of State Department Arabists, the Washington policy type and the overseas cultural type, and that Eagleton was definitely the overseas type. Eagleton ran the U.S. Interests Section in Baghdad from 1980 through 1984, helping pave the way for the resumption of diplomatic relations between Iraq

and the United States which occurred following the end of his tenure. He later became the U.S. ambassador to Syria, and then left the Foreign Service to work for the United Nations in Vienna in behalf of Palestinian refugees. Eagleton is the only U.S. diplomat with a working knowledge of both Arabic and Kurdish to have served in Iraq. If ever someone in the State Department had the mental tools to understand Iraq and where it was headed, it was—or should have been—William Eagleton.

Eagleton was born in 1926 in Peoria, Illinois. He attended local public schools before going to Yale, where he began to master Spanish and French. His first Foreign Service job was in Madrid. “It was through southern Spain, with its Moorish element, that I became romantically interested in the Arab world,” he explains. “I requested a Middle East posting and got Damascus in 1951.” From that point onward Eagleton’s overseas addresses appear more akin to those of an adventurer than to those of a diplomat: Kirkuk, in Iraqi Kurdistan; Tabriz, in northwestern Iran; Tangiers, Morocco; Noukchott, Mauritania; Aden, South Yemen; Algiers, Algeria; and finally Tripoli, Libya, before he went to live in Baghdad for four years.

“Read, travel, read, travel, that’s the way to go,” Eagleton told me. “Certainly the old Victorian travel books, but also some of the modern political stuff. An Arabist is someone interested in getting deep into the culture and people of the region. Those who aren’t interested in the culture don’t deserve the title of Arabist.” Along the way Eagleton wrote not only a political history of the short-lived Kurdish Republic of Mahabad (in post-Second World War Iran) but also a book on Kurdish carpets. In all those places Eagleton was his own boss, without even the need for ambassadorial protocol—running a lonely consulate in a provincial backwater, or an interests section in a radical Arab capital. When Eagleton was nominated to be ambassador to Syria, in 1984, his long stints in radical countries raised eyebrows in Congress. “The State Department didn’t help me out much. I had to get Jewish friends from Cleveland and elsewhere to call [Senators Rudy] Boschwitz and [Howard] Metzenbaum to tell them—well, you know—that I was okay.” Eagleton felt compelled to tell me this, although I hadn’t asked him about his confirmation troubles. Actually, I found Eagleton’s motives for passing his life in places like South Yemen, Libya, and Iraq quite easy to fathom. At sixty-five, he has eyes that still appear young and full of enthusiasm: they are the eyes of a traveler who has retained a youthful disposition by means of constant ad-

venture, challenge, and cultural stimulation. Eagleton is a true spiritual descendant of the early missionary-explorers.

His critics on the State Department's Policy Planning Staff and on the National Security Council in the early 1980s—Reagan Administration appointees, for the most part—were never impressed, however. "Eagleton was a classic case," one of them told me. "He didn't know how to apply his cultural and ethnographic background knowledge to political analysis. We'd laugh at his cables."

IFIRST MET EAGLETON IN BAGHDAD, IN MARCH OF 1984. It was in the wake of a horrific incident that the media generally failed to report. In June of 1983 Robert Spurling, an engineer from Illinois who was overseeing operations at the Novohotel in Baghdad, had arrived at Saddam International Airport with his wife and three daughters, in order to fly home to the Midwest. At passport control an Iraqi official informed Spurling that there was a "small problem" with his exit visa and asked him to wait while the rest of his family proceeded to the departure lounge. After his wife and daughters passed through the barrier, Spurling was arrested as a spy. Iraqi officials then ordered Spurling's wife and children onto the plane without him. Somehow his wife managed to phone the U.S. mission.

For three months the Iraqi authorities denied any knowledge of Spurling. Then, in August, after Eagleton's persistent appeals, Iraq admitted that it was holding such-and-such a man. Eagleton's own check into Spurling's background revealed that the Iraqi allegations of espionage were nonsense. In October the Iraqis delivered Spurling to Eagleton's doorstep. Spurling had been subjected to electric-shock torture in his genitals and elsewhere. He had been beaten with weighted fists and wooden bludgeons. His fingernails and toenails had been ripped out and his fingers and toes crushed. He had been kept in solitary confinement on a starvation diet.

A Canadian diplomat in Baghdad first told me the story, all of which Eagleton confirmed, adding that Spurling had spent several days recovering at Eagleton's official residence before flying back to the United States. "This is a completely arbitrary system," Eagleton told me during our conversation in 1984. "There are no laws, no charges filed; anything can happen. I wish I could recommend one Iraqi official who would be worth talking to, who might say something to you meaningful about his country. Unfortunately, there is no one I can think of. They're simply too scared." Eagleton added that the Iraqi security apparatus responsible for Spurling's arrest and torture was headed by Saddam's half-brother, Barzan Ibrahim al-Takriti. Barzan later became Iraq's human-rights delegate in Geneva.

Eagleton also spoke about the Kurdish mountains. He indicated that one could not comprehend the puzzle of Iraq by knowing the Arab pieces alone—an insight that was less ordinary in 1984, when he expressed it, than it is

now. Yet Eagleton was enthusiastic about the Arab portions, too: "You should read what the British had to say about Iraq. They loved this place." Though Eagleton dutifully noted the Spurling incident in his annual human-rights report, he urged me to see the matter in perspective. Never before had something like that happened to a U.S. citizen here, and Eagleton implied that he had obtained a commitment from the Iraqi authorities that it never would again. (So far it hasn't.) "Saddam is at the tough end of the moderate Arab world," Eagleton assured me in 1984. "Even when the Iran-Iraq war ends, Saddam could not return to his radical policies, because Iran will continue to be a threat and Iraq will need help from the Gulf Arabs."

When I saw Eagleton again, seven years later in Washington, after the end of the Gulf War, he defended that last statement. "I don't think I did anything wrong. Saddam was at the time moving precisely in the direction we wanted him to go—toward moderation. There was a period of a year back then when we had no documented evidence of Iraqi involvement in terrorism. So our policy, encouraged by [King] Fahd and [Hosni] Mubarak, reflected this. But I despised Saddam. I knew Iraq in the good old days [before the 1958 military coup, which ended the monarchy]. Now I couldn't even invite my friends from the bazaar to come to my house and look at my rugs. They would have been arrested."

Eagleton, who was held in suspicion by some of Saddam Hussein's clique because of his demonstrated concern for the Kurds, and who deserves credit for Spurling's release, did not feel in 1983 that the impending resumption of relations between the United States and Iraq was worth disrupting over a single incident, however unfortunate. An innocent American had been torn from his wife and children and tortured in the manner of a dreary bureaucratic procedure, unconnected to any war or invasion with which the United States was involved. If appeasement was a force gathering from a variety of particulars, then the U.S. government's ability to overlook the troubling implications of what Saddam's half-brother had done to this American seems indeed seminal. But appeasement does not perfectly describe our tragedy in Iraq. There are other factors. There is that *faiblesse* that Hume Horan spoke about, and there is also that ineradicable impulse among diplomats to find something useful to do in a country where there may be little useful to be done.



The Enthusiasm Factor

ARCHIE ROOSEVELT, THE GRANDSON OF PRESIDENT Theodore Roosevelt and a pioneer Arabist at the Central Intelligence Agency, writes in his memoir, *For Lust of Knowing*, "Baghdad held so many fascinations it was difficult to tear myself away, but an entire country had yet to be explored and under-

stood." It is the period of the Second World War he is writing of, and as Roosevelt himself points out, Baghdad was then a backwater of a backwater: a supply base for the British in neighboring Iran, who were holding back the Germans and, after a fashion, the Soviets there. His activities were less a function of the need for intelligence on Iraq's peoples than of his own fascination with Iraq. David Newton, another "top-of-the-curve" Horan contemporary, and the U.S. ambassador to Iraq from 1984 through 1988, brought a similar enthusiasm to his job.

"If you have a strong historical knowledge of a place," Newton told me, "you see it through different eyes. And if you really know Baghdad, you can still get a sense of the Ottoman city. It's hard—sort of like reconstructing *Homo erectus*. But I love the *souks*. I'm a romantic at heart. During my time in Baghdad, I used to give small groups of embassy personnel guided tours around the city. One of the appeals of Iraq is that it's so distinctive. Once you're there, you can't be anywhere else. It's a reality that's not quite Persian, or Turkish, or even Arabian."

Like Eagleton before him, Newton had a romantic interest in Iraq that, it must be said, in no way blinded him to its horrors. These two men were always willing to talk to the few journalists who happened to show up in Baghdad to write about the regime's brutalities. When I first met Newton, in the Iraqi capital in August of 1986, another foreigner—Ian Richter, a British businessman—had just been arrested by the Iraqis on trumped-up charges. "This is the most terrified population in the Arab world," Newton told me. "If the security services somehow get it into their heads that you've done something, there's not much any of us can do to help." During that same visit I had my own brush with Iraq's regime-induced paranoia. I had been granted a visa to visit a group of pro-Saddam Hussein Kurds in the north who held territory over the border in Iran. But upon introducing me to my Kurdish hosts, Iraqi security men confiscated my passport. I did not see it again until two weeks later, when, in a car stuffed with the same morose-looking security men, it was handed back to me en route to the airport. Last spring I sought Newton out again to discuss what, exactly, he had thought he was accomplishing in Baghdad.

NEWTON IS NOW THE INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS ADVISER at the National War College, in Washington, D.C., his spacious office in a domed brick building that is bordered by a golf green, the Washington Channel, and the Anacostia River. These comfortable surroundings made me realize how ridiculous is the notion that Arabists have fallen on hard times owing to the debacle in Iraq. Newton, fifty-six, is a dapper man with a trim moustache. He has years of firsthand experience in five Arab countries, and a "4" language rating not only in

Arabic but also in German. This kind of man, unlike so many of the policy mavens who crowd Washington, has tangible assets that lose little of their market value because of this or that failure in prognostication. Arabists are like doctors and lawyers: you can be angry with them, but you will always have a need for their skills. During the Gulf War, Newton acted as an adviser to the Pentagon. Like Horan, Murphy, Eagleton, and other ex-ambassadors in the Arab world, he is in a way making a sacrifice by staying in the academic and policy fields. All these people could be earning more money with oil companies or other Middle East business interests.

"I was a bookworm as a kid," Newton recalls. "By eleven I wanted to be an archaeologist, because of a fascination with ancient Egypt. What hooked me permanently on the Near East was the lectures I attended at Harvard by Sir Hamilton Gibb, a wonderful orientalist." Gibb, whose writings are replete with exquisitely subtle criticisms of Arab Islamic civilization, is nevertheless loathed by Elie Kedourie and other Zionists because of his fundamental toleration of the existing Arab political order—just as Loy Henderson, though admired by old State Department hands for his clairvoyance regarding Stalin and his role in getting the Soviets to withdraw from northern Iran in 1946, is seen by some friends of Israel as a villain who was opposed to the creation of the Jewish state. Attitudes like these, refined and hardened over decades, toward Gibb, Henderson, and innumerable other obscure figures, give the outsider a sense of how vast is the psychological chasm separating the Arab-oriented and Israeli-oriented subcultures in Washington.

Yet it is a Palestinian Arab scholar, Edward Said, who is hardest on Gibb, claiming in his book *Orientalism* that "Gibb's inaugural biases remain a formidable obstacle for anyone hoping to understand modern Islam." Newton responds, annoyed: "Said did a job on orientalists. You can't judge people of the 1940s by the standards of the 1980s. There were no Arab scholars back then on Gibb's level." Not only Newton but also other Arabists, I found, feel genuinely caught between the animus of friends of Israel on one hand and that of Arab scholars on the other.

Prominently displayed in Newton's office are color photographs of himself and April Glaspie—his successor as the U.S. ambassador to Iraq—in the presidential palace in Baghdad, both smiling as they introduce Saddam Hussein and Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz to a congressional delegation led by Senators Robert Dole and Alan K. Simpson. This was the occasion, a few months before the invasion of Kuwait, when Dole and Simpson apologized to Saddam Hussein for Voice of America broadcasts critical of his regime. "I keep these photos in the office as a teaching device: they fascinate my students," Newton told me. He seems to be a man completely at peace with himself, who talks easily and honestly about his mistakes.

"Saddam put a lot of emphasis on nation-building and the Westernization of the economy, which was popular. Because he had everybody scared, one would have thought that there was no reason for excess brutality. Obviously, the gassing of the Kurds [in March of 1988] affected my view. We worked on intuition, with very few sources."

"After the Kurds were gassed, why didn't you just pull out—close the embassy?" I asked, alluding to a conversation I had had some years back with Robert Keeley, a former ambassador to Greece who now heads the Middle

ARABIST-BASHERS COULD HAVE A LOT OF FUN WITH that statement, reeking as it seems to of moral relativism. But it needs explaining. Despite several visits to Syria, I was shocked the first time I arrived in Iraq. In Damascus, I could walk into the telex room of the post office and punch out a story unsupervised. In Baghdad plate glass separated me from the telex machines. My copy was handed to an Iraqi on the other side of the window, and that was that. I could travel wherever I wanted to in Syria; in Iraq trying to would have landed me in prison. Going to Syria from Iraq was like coming up



GERTRUDE BELL PICNICKING WITH KING FAISAL OF IRAQ (SECOND FROM RIGHT), 1922

East Institute, in Washington. Keeley shut the U.S. embassy in Uganda at the time of Idi Amin's reign of terror. "You maintain a diplomatic presence as long as you're effective," Keeley told me. "But in Uganda there came a point when we really were no longer able to have an effect. To be true to our own values, the only thing we could do was to leave, and scream about Amin from the outside."

Newton said, "That made sense for Uganda"—a landlocked country of no strategic or economic importance to the United States. "But it's naive to think you can just pull out of a militarily powerful and oil-rich developing country on the Gulf with which American companies were doing hundreds of millions of dollars of trade." What might have been accomplished in Iraq, according to Newton, was that over time, with U.S. help, "Iraq's level of repression could have been improved to that of Syria."

for air. Making a Syria out of an Iraq would be a minor human-rights miracle. "But appreciating this," notes Peter Bechtold, who runs the Middle East area-studies program at the Foreign Service Institute, "requires a frame of reference based on travel experience that not only most Americans lack, but so do people on the National Security Council."

Frame of reference is the clue to understanding the behavior of Newton and his colleagues in Iraq. Living in Baghdad lays bare a second reality besides the one of the prison yard and the torture chamber: the reality of an urban, essentially middle-class culture crying out silently to the West. In no other densely populated zone of the Arab world is Islam so downplayed and literacy so widespread as in Iraq. This urbanization has not come about through the destabilizing migration of peasants into the big cities, as has occurred in Iran and Egypt, although it is true that Iraq is unstable: because its relatively efficient and well-

educated people live in crowded conditions and are riven by tribal and national feuds, extreme levels of repression are required to hold the country together. Yet the promise of an Arab state empowered by its middle class, and thus truly modern, has always been there; it is what attracted the British in the first place. Until 1958, when the military overthrew the pro-British monarchy, Iraq, in the words of the British Arabist Peter Mansfield, "was the West's favorite Arab state," considered to have an industrial and agricultural potential unrivaled in the Middle East. It was this same ever-present pageant of secular urbanism, so much more visible and dynamic than the analogous process in other Arab countries, that formed the ground on which U.S. diplomats placed their hopes, theorizing that whatever the gruesome brutalities of the regime, the social reality would eventually have to overcome that which the regime tried to impose on it; one just needed to be patient and work in the interstices until that day dawned. To be sure, for Newton, McCreary, and the others, the sheer professional excitement of living and working in a core Arab country provided a significant motive for investing one's tour of duty with a high goal. By the time this enthusiasm wore thin, the tour had expired and a replacement arrived bearing a fresh supply of idealism. Competition for a posting in Baghdad was always intense.

Norman Anderson, who served in Morocco, Lebanon, and Tunisia and also as the ambassador to Sudan, makes this observation relevant to his colleagues in Iraq: "There is not enough posting continuity in the Mideast, because with so many embassies in Arabic-speaking countries, it is rare for a diplomat to go to the same place twice. Kennan and Bohlen were able to be on target regarding Stalin because they each had several tours of duty in the Soviet Union, the only place where Russian is spoken." Though the situation was ameliorated somewhat by "lateral cable traffic," whereby reports from the Baghdad embassy were sent for review and comment to Arabists with earlier experience in Iraq, one was nevertheless reminded of something that had occurred in

Vietnam: because every ambitious officer wanted time in a combat zone, they all got twelve-month tours, and in the process little institutional memory was accumulated on the battlefield.

Some Arabists argue that the closed and totalitarian nature of Saddam Hussein's regime made accurate assessments of it problematic anyway. Chas Freeman, who has been the ambassador to Saudi Arabia since before the Gulf War, disagrees. "Area expertise means sufficient understanding of a language and a local reasoning process to put

yourself in the position of a decision-maker in that society and make a fairly accurate prediction about what he will do. If the number of decision-makers is limited, then you actually have a better statistical chance of predicting the future, because all your analytical energies can be focused on one individual: Saddam."

But the succession of embassy staffs in Baghdad—impressed, like the British, by the awesome human and economic potential of Iraq—were not thinking coldly enough about the blood-stained ruler of the country. Nor were they encouraged to. Remember, the Arabists in Baghdad contributed to but did not ultimately formulate U.S. policy. My talk with Eagleton in 1984 came during a period when CIA Director William Casey was rumored to be striking an intelligence deal with Iraq

as a lever against the Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran. U.S.-Iraqi trade was then beginning to boom, and both the non-Arabist commercial element of Eagleton's staff and the Arabist political one had few qualms about conducting business as usual.



WILLIAM EAGLETON, FREED HOSTAGE LAWRENCE JENCO, 1986

A Policy Vacuum

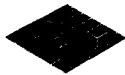
THROUGH EAGLETON'S AND NEWTON'S TENURES in Baghdad the area specialists were at least operating within a well-defined policy construct. In 1988, however, the Iran-Iraq war ended, and Saddam Hussein provided a glimpse of his postwar self by exterminating five thousand Kurdish

civilians. That was the time to begin a vigorous reassessment of the eight-year tilt toward Iraq, especially since a new Administration was entering the White House and a new ambassador was about to be dispatched to Baghdad. But the policy review seems never to have taken place.

Part of the reason for this was the new Secretary of State, James Baker, and the way in which he shifted the balance of power inside the State Department. Baker is the most powerful and interesting Secretary of State since Kissinger. At the outset both men distrusted the career Foreign Service, particularly the area specialists. But, according to Freeman, "Kissinger quickly acquired the talent to dig into the bowels of the bureaucracy while circumventing senior officials, in order to suck out the bank of information the area experts represented." Baker is different. One former assistant secretary says, "To a greater extent than Kissinger, Baker operates alone. He meets with a Middle Eastern leader, then he tells Dennis Ross [the head of the Policy Planning Staff] what Ross needs to know, then Ross gives orders to his own subordinate, and so on. It's a narrow chain of command."

The only Middle East issue that really energized Baker was the one with a domestic political payoff: the Arab-Israeli question. That is why one saw the elevation of people like Ross and Deputy Assistant Secretary Daniel Kurtzer—people who are not traditional Arabists but, in the words of an Arabist colleague of theirs, "Arab-Israeli *wallahs*," with limited interest in peripheral inter-Arab disputes. This may partly explain why, as critics observed, by 1990 Iraq was completely "off the radar screen."

Ambassadors, Horan says, can and should make policy recommendations, but as Foreign Service professionals they have a duty to reflect, exactly, Washington's current attitude toward a particular country. April Glaspie's fate was to succeed Newton as ambassador to Iraq at a time when there was more drift than actual policy. And so, as in the days of Her Majesty's colonial administration—when the British Arab Bureau was a law unto itself—the area specialists were left to fill the vacuum with their own goals and justifications for being in the awful country they were in, goals and justifications not always fully congruent with those of the nation whose interests they were supposed to serve.



April Glaspie

IRAQ CERTAINLY HAS A WAY OF CONFERRING FAME ON female Arabists. But let it be understood that April Glaspie is in a league entirely different from that of Freya Stark and Gertrude Bell. They, despite their impressive knowledge, were essentially amateurs whose leisure time, the result of inherited wealth, allowed for the development of their personalities in exotic climes. Glaspie is the opposite: a consummate professional and

"Washington-type" Arabist, a workaholic upper-echelon bureaucrat rather than a grand lady.

Henry Kissinger is said to have been impressed by Glaspie during his shuttle diplomacy of the mid-1970s, when she was posted to Cairo—and not because, as has been suggested, she found a quick-service laundry for him but because she was doing everything from finding the laundry to taking care of consular matters to analyzing Egyptian political trends (this was before the U.S. re-established relations with Egypt, and our diplomatic staff was consequently still skeletal). Hume Horan, his institutional loyalty flaring, bears witness: "April's our Joan of Arc, top of the curve, a first-class Arabist. The media need a villain, so they've painted her as 'the appeaser.' But ambassadors look only as good or as bad as the policy they represent. I was fortunate in Sudan, because Washington backed me up to the hilt with a moral and clear-cut policy. That was not the case in Iraq."

Samuel W. Lewis, the president of the United States Institute of Peace and a former ambassador to Israel, provided a more exacting interpretation of the ambassador's role at a recent conference in Washington devoted to diplomacy: "The responsibility of the ambassador and his staff is to know more about the country they're in than anyone else and to make policy recommendations to the government." In the view of Lewis, Horan, and others, the ambassador's recommendations, if not always approved, should at least serve as the basis for ongoing policy discussions regarding a particular country. By this definition Glaspie may not have been the villain that the scandal- and personality-obsessed media require in order to simplify the complex question of why the United States was caught off guard by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. But more than any other individual in the career State Department, she does bear responsibility. Therefore, a close look at her record is called for.

"April has never been involved in any issue where she was not a policy-driver," says a former colleague who knows her well. "She was dynamic and aggressive, and supremely confident. April dominated issues. It was just not in her character to be a passive ambassador implementing a policy she did not fully agree with." Indeed, Glaspie's influence on U.S. Middle East policy was significant even before she became ambassador, when she headed the State Department's northern Arabian division, which put Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan within her domain.

In fact, it was Syria's alleged terrorist activities that may have revealed Glaspie's policy viewpoint most clearly. In 1986 British and Israeli intelligence caught an Arab terrorist, Nizar Hindawi, attempting to smuggle a bomb aboard an El Al jetliner at London's Heathrow Airport in the suitcase of his unsuspecting, pregnant girlfriend. Electronic eavesdropping revealed that Hindawi had been receiving orders through the Syrian embassy, whose ambassador was subsequently expelled. The European Community took the unusual step of imposing sanctions

on Syria before the United States did. "April and Bill Eagleton were violently opposed to a tough American reaction," says a former colleague. "I remember violent discussions with them." One source describes the policy dispute between Glaspie's northern Arabian division and State's counterterrorism people as a bureaucratic "guerilla war."

"April Glaspie was much more protective of radical Arabs than our policy justified," says a bureaucratic rival at the State Department. With respect to Iraq, Glaspie advocated everything possible to make the Iraqis feel comfortable to avoid a disruption in relations. A Capitol Hill staff member adds, "Her meeting with Saddam Hussein was the culmination of a failed policy line that she and [NEA Assistant Secretary John] Kelly had been tirelessly advocating since 1988." This same person indicates that Dole and Simpson's apology for the VOA broadcasts calling for democracy in Iraq was the result of a prior briefing by Glaspie, which "conditioned the senators for the cave-in." A second source, who accompanied the senators on the trip, is of the same opinion: "I am a hundred percent sure that the apology was the result of Ambassador Glaspie's briefing."

In September of 1987, when the State Department had submitted Glaspie's name to the White House and Congress for approval as the next ambassador to Iraq, some members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee had not been pleased. True, her record was impressive. Glaspie had won several State Department awards for political reporting from Egypt and from Kuwait, and a Superior Honor award for her work in Damascus. But, as one former Senate staff member told me, Iraq in 1987 was the only Arab country fighting a major war, and it had the most brutal and difficult regime in the Arab world, and yet the State Department was "pushing hard" a nominee who had never before been tested as an ambassador—for a job where, as another staff member now puts it, "one's reporting skills are less important than one's *representing* skills."

Glaspie's reputation—deserved or undeserved—for being too sympathetic to Arab radicals also did not help her. Another irritating factor, according to both a Senate staff member and a formerly high-ranking Arabist, was that at roughly the same time that Glaspie's name was submitted, the State Department had asked Congress to confirm Robert H. Pelletreau Jr. as ambassador to Tunisia. Pelletreau has always been popular in Washington. A former ambassador to Bahrain who had worked at the Defense Department, Pelletreau had firsthand experience in dealing with Israelis as well as with Arabs, and has a reputation for being bold, analytical, and tough as nails. "We felt Glaspie should have gone to Tunisia, a less challenging post, to gain ambassadorial experience," says a Senate source, "and Pelletreau should have gone to Iraq. He was the perfect person for dealing with Saddam." (Pelletreau is now the ambassador to Egypt.)

As it turned out, the Senate committee held up Glaspie's nomination for six months before confirming her. "A few people were uneasy about the choice," a staff member says. "But there was no smoking gun."

BUT THE TRUTH ABOUT A PERSON AS TALENTED AS Glaspie is complex, and the foregoing is just one layer of it. Chas Freeman recalls, "The few times I met her, I got the feeling of a tough woman." Freeman met Glaspie in Bonn in April of 1990, almost four months before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. They and other U.S. ambassadors in the Middle East had come to Germany for a conference with John Kelly. Among the many documents submitted for review at this chiefs-of-mission conference was a long, three-part telegram crafted by Freeman and his embassy staff in Riyadh. Freeman thought that the winding-down of the Cold War would affect theaters beyond Europe. There would be "a collapse in the Horn of Africa" (which soon took place, with the overthrow of leftist regimes in Somalia and Ethiopia) and an upsurge in the expression of age-old local rivalries throughout the Arab world. The telegram specifically warned of the danger of Iraqi aggression against Kuwait.

"The telegram flew in the face of Kelly and his staff," one source says. But one of the few people who spoke up and supported Freeman's thesis about Saddam Hussein's intentions was Glaspie. "April was certainly not wearing blinkers regarding the despicable nature of the Iraqi regime and its potential for troublemaking," said a source who had access to the pre-invasion cables.

There need not be a contradiction between the April Glaspie whose policy recommendations were soft on Saddam Hussein and the one who recognized his potential for wreaking havoc. What her friends and enemies repeatedly mention about her is that, as one person said, "April is intellectually honest, loves a good argument, and is always willing to entertain another point of view." In short, rather than a bureaucratic rubber stamp, she was an exemplary Foreign Service officer, whose policy recommendations in this case—not to do anything that would provoke or annoy the Iraqi President, because that would be likely to feed his paranoia—turned out to be tragically inappropriate.

"The Seventh Floor"—the Secretary of State and his top advisers—never did act on Freeman's telegram. Kelly's skepticism may have been only one of the reasons. Like most bureaucracies, the State Department is bedeviled by information overload. Foreign Service officers send thousands of cables daily from more than two hundred embassies and consulates around the world. Many world crises have doubtless been predicted in one cable or another that never got the proper attention. One Arabist says, "If George Kennan sent his famous Long Telegram about Soviet intentions today, nobody high up would get to read it."

Hostages to Idealism

NOT ONLY WAS APRIL GLASPIE PERHAPS THE VICTIM of a distracted policy apparatus, but those signals that Washington did transmit to her could only have been confusing. The Administration, concentrating on the Baltic States, the reunification of Germany, and Arab-Israeli issues in early 1990, while indicating its intention to withdraw from the Gulf those ships that remained from the 1988 Kuwait reflagging operation, seemed to encourage its diplomats in Baghdad to ignore Iraq's behavior toward Kuwait (even as behind-the-scenes aid to Iraq continued). To confront a powerful and volatile dictator, an ambassador needs specific support from Washington. Otherwise—as the Foreign Service drills into the heads of its career officers—an ambassador is supposed to ferret out the ruler's intentions, take notes, and report immediately to the State Department.

April Glaspie met with Saddam Hussein one week before Iraq invaded Kuwait. Glaspie saw Hussein without a notetaker, because she had been summoned to the Iraqi Foreign Ministry on short notice and did not know that she was about to meet the Iraqi President, with whom she had never had a private meeting during her two years in Baghdad. She wondered if this could be the beginning of an "opening," says a colleague of hers, and she obviously wanted the meeting to go well, especially as there was no time to get special instructions from Washington.

Glaspie told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee at an open hearing that the Iraqi transcript of the meeting, which depicts her as acting in a fawning manner toward Saddam Hussein, and as appearing to indicate that the United States did not care how Iraq settled its border dispute with Kuwait, was doctored. But Senate staffers say that the Iraqi transcript and her own cable of the event "track almost perfectly." Glaspie, they and other observers conclude, was the ultimate staff person—ob-

essed with the diplomatic process to the point where she couldn't accept that sometimes it is better for the process to collapse than for it to continue.

Her performance turned out to be emblematic of the policy vacuum in Washington and of the pathetic political labors of the U.S. embassy in Baghdad in the six years since relations had been re-established. Only after Iraq invaded Kuwait did Washington clearly enunciate its position, when George Bush and his national security adviser, Brent Scowcroft, belatedly decided that Kuwait was something we cared about.

Glaspie told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that "by staying [in Iraq] we could undertake diplomatic activity," such as extracting a promise from the Iraqis after the Kurds were gassed "that they wouldn't do it again." Listen again to McCreary: "In an awful country the smallest victory, no matter how inconsequential, gives you an incredibly big boost." These are not unlike the rationalizations of hostages, who try to occupy the endless stream of days with uplifting activity. Rather than appeasers, our Foreign Service officers in Baghdad—in the absence of responsible guidance from Washington—became hostages to a professional idealism that blinded them to the obvious: by the late 1980s having diplomatic relations with Iraq was not an

achievement but a concession.

But maintaining relations is an entrenched habit of mind, and not just among Arabists. The State Department's attitude, according to Robert Keeley, is "We open embassies; we don't close them." In March of 1973, when Keeley sent a cable advising Washington to "seriously consider" closing its Uganda embassy, because of security problems arising from the iniquities of Idi Amin, the State Department sent out an inspector to see if Keeley had taken leave of his senses. Regarding Iraq, having recently upgraded the interests section in Baghdad to full embassy status, after a lapse of seventeen years, the idea of downgrading it to an interests section once again, in order to show displeasure over the extermination of the Kurds, ran counter to the Foggy Bottom mindset—a mindset that Eagleton explains: "Once you downsize re-



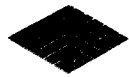
APRIL GLASPIE ON CAPITOL HILL, 1991

Conditioned by their past and by their training, and by their perception of Iraq as the Arab country of the future, the Arabists pushed to maintain the status quo: a measure of engagement, a measure of appeasement.

lations, it's hard to upgrade again without a pretext, so you can't pull out an ambassador every time you get mad."

Richard Parker, Eagleton's longtime friend and Arabist colleague, politely but strongly disagrees. "We certainly should have lowered relations in 1988. We shouldn't even have re-established them in 1984. All it did was help massage Saddam's ego." One of Glaspie's subordinates in Baghdad admits, "We had absolutely no influence."

Sustained only by vague hopes, the Americans in Iraq, like the British a half century before, were destined to watch in disbelief as another *farhoud* unleashed its fury. This time Kuwaitis, not Jews, paid the price.



PART III *A New Breed?*

A BREAK IN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS CONSTITUTES the worst career nightmare for a Foreign Service officer. That is why the will to cut relations must come from the Seventh Floor and the White House. One U.S. diplomat who had been assigned to a troubled Arab country told me, "If the size of our mission staff had been cut down, I was next on the list to be sent home to Washington. I desperately, desperately wanted to stay on post. I'm Jewish. The Six-Day War was one of those defining moments of my youth, when I really identified with being a Jew. Radical Arab countries were like the dark side of the moon for me. To learn Arabic and serve as a diplomat in one of these places was just fascinating. How could I be expected to want to leave after just arriving?"

I'll call this diplomat Walter—he is an Arabist who may again serve in a radical Arab country, and does not want his real name used in connection with his religion. He has been a political officer in both the Arab world and Israel. He is distinctly middle-class, with degrees from the State University of New York at Binghamton and Stony Brook. I interviewed him at his mother-in-law's townhouse, in an unremarkable New Jersey development, where he was spending his vacation between assignments.

Walter is typical of the new generation of Arabists now moving into important positions. An increasing number of them have ethnic and suburban roots, have studied Hebrew, and have served in Israel. Molly Williamson, an Asian-American who speaks both Arabic and Hebrew,

was recently named the U.S. consul general in East Jerusalem—perhaps the most sensitive of Foreign Service assignments, because of its key role in Palestinian-Israeli peace negotiations. Though she refuses to be quoted, Williamson revealed herself in several recent conversations with me to be someone who has gone beyond mere objectivity, to a point where she deeply intuitively the angst-ridden thought processes of Arabs and Jews alike. The elevation of a new-breed Arabist like her not only suggests that knowledge of both Semitic languages is a likely route to promotion in today's State Department but also shows how James Baker, despite his grievous mistake over Iraq, seems to be sharpening NEA into a precision tool for the years of tortuous peace negotiations ahead.

Another characteristic of the new Arabists is that many of them have Peace Corps backgrounds. Walter, for instance, served in the Peace Corps in the Muslim world before joining the Foreign Service. More than a third of those Foreign Service officers chosen for last year's Senior Seminar—a prestigious program for potential ambassadors—were Peace Corps veterans. The Peace Corps experience, redolent as it is of foreign aid to the Third World, may seem hopelessly out of date in the current, post-Cold War climate. But in terms of what the Foreign Service needs to improve its analytical skills and to adapt to this new reality, the Peace Corps has never been more relevant.

Peace Corps graduates, adept at living and working in the bush on meager resources, are oriented toward a leaner Foreign Service that gets out onto the streets—embassy paperwork be damned—to find out what is going on. The growth of the Peace Corps contingent among Arabists, and in the Foreign Service at large, runs parallel to the middle-class takeover of the formerly elitist State Department—a process that has now reached the point of saturation. A Peace Corps background in today's State Department carries the allure that an Ivy League education once had.

THESE NEW ARABISTS STAND OLD STEREOTYPES on their heads. Alberto Fernandez, for instance, is a thirty-four-year-old Cuban-American from Miami. A graduate of the University of Arizona, he came into the Foreign Service by way of the U.S. Army, where he volunteered for Arabic training at the Defense Language Institute. "After growing up in an insular and suffocating ethnic society, I needed something completely

different to define myself," he says. Because of his knowledge of Spanish and Arabic, Fernandez has served in Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates.

He is critical of the older generation: "It's true Arabists have not liked Middle Eastern minorities. Arabists have been guilty in the past of loving the majority and the idea of *Uruba*, which roughly translates as 'Arabism.' I remember once going to a Foreign Service party and hearing people refer to the Maronite Christians in Lebanon as fascists. I love and am fascinated by minorities: Maronites, Copts, southern Sudanese, Kurds, whatever. I feel less strongly about the cause of the Palestinians than I used to. There are lots of injustices in the world, and self-determination is not something the Arabs want to apply anywhere else in the Middle East."

Yet Fernandez, like all the Arabists I interviewed, sees the Arab world embarking on a long and convoluted path toward political modernization. Other Arabists adumbrate Fernandez's point. Although unable to predict specific developments a few months down the road, they draw the vague outlines of the longer-term future more confidently. "The Saudis will, over time, rewrite their social contract without ever ripping up the old one," Chas Freeman, the ambassador in Riyadh, says. Jack McCreary says, "There is an enormous widening gap between the regimes and the people. Arabs see clearly that they are cut off from their own governments and that their press lies. Arab intellectuals trust Israel Radio's Arabic service more than their own stations. If Arab governments want to control their own populations in the future, they're going to have to tell the truth more often." Dovetailing with such liberalization, some Arabists say, will be a further break-up in the Arab world itself, with the Mahgreb states and the Gulf sheikhdoms increasingly consumed by their own regional problems.

WHATEVER THE DESTINY OF THE PALESTINIAN-Israeli relationship, it seems possible that the coming decades in the Middle East may be less traumatic for the United States than previous decades. Although Americans are certainly disappointed at Saddam Hussein's ability to hold on to power in Iraq, the Arabist assumption that Iraq will undergo a middle-class-driven reform in keeping with its secular and urban character may yet, given enough years, prove accurate. If history teaches us anything, it is that nothing is permanent. But the metamorphosis will be frustratingly slow.

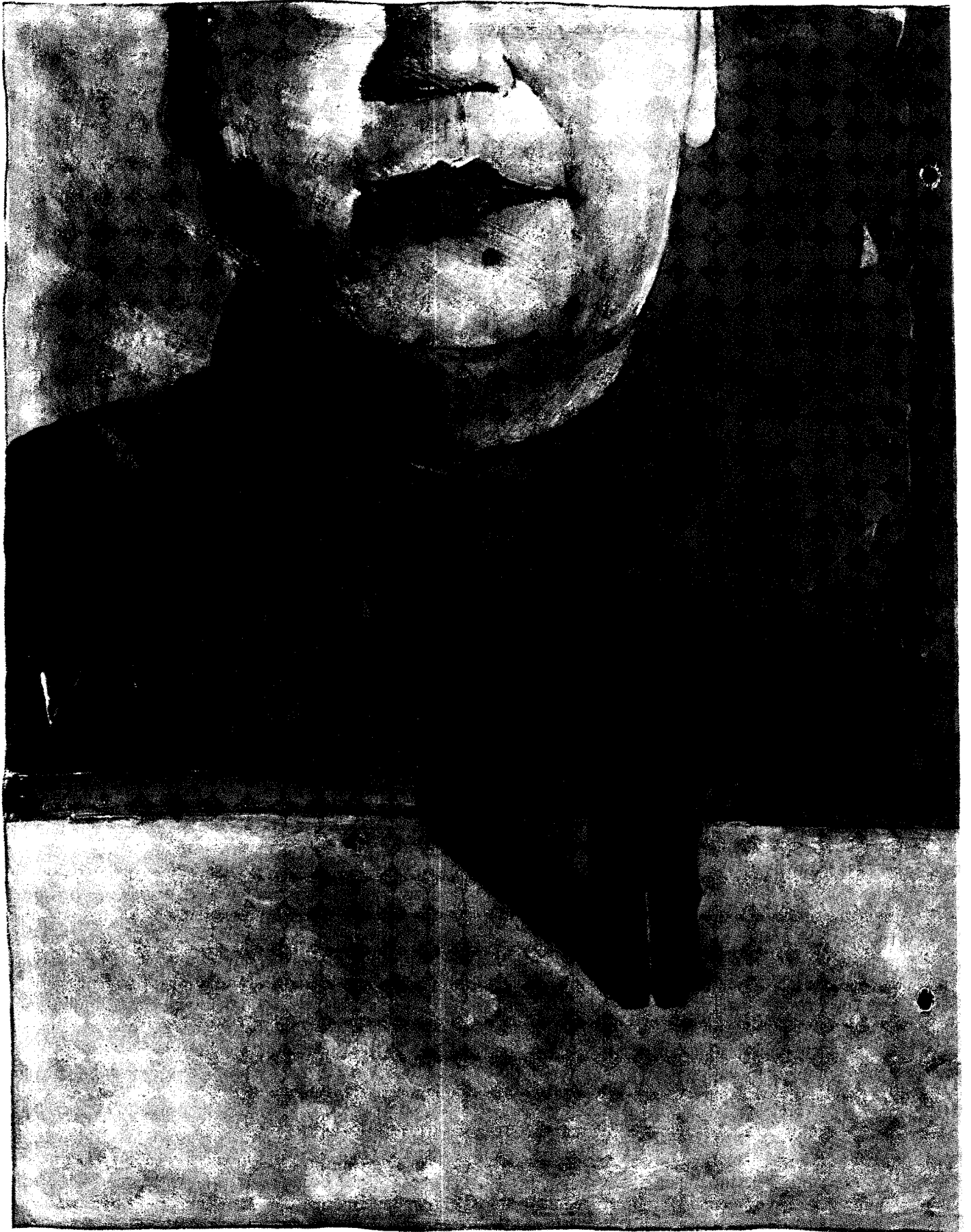
Peter Rodman, of the Johns Hopkins Foreign Policy Institute, wonders whether the Arabists' best days actually lie ahead. "Since we will no longer have to look at the Middle East in East-West terms, it might be more appropriate, as Arabists have always urged, to treat the region on its own terms. But Arabists may blow their opportunity if they take a sentimental view of the fundamentalist phenomenon, which is the new strategic danger." In a

new climate, in which various forces impel Arab leaders to focus inward on their own societies rather than on Israel, the interstices that Arabists operate within should be wider and remain open for longer periods.

The importance of exploiting those interstices—pushing matters like food aid, cultural relations, and hostage negotiations forward before an opening disappears, and then going back and starting over again—cannot be overstated, for it is in this way, rather than on the level of grand policy, that Arabists do their most effective work. Norman Anderson, the former ambassador to Sudan, observes, "Foreign affairs has become so complicated and multilateral—with issues like drugs, the environment, and famine, as well as trade and military—that Washington can't know exactly how its policies are to be carried out in each individual country in every specific case. That is the job of the embassies. And it's hard to gather information on a country and do all this without knowledge of the language." He adds that just as he was the only Arabic-speaking U.S. diplomat in Sudan when a coup occurred, April Glaspie was the only Arabic-speaking U.S. diplomat in Iraq on the eve of the invasion of Kuwait. (McCreary had finished his tour of duty there.) Although around two dozen U.S. embassies and consulates have multiple job slots requiring a knowledge of Arabic, Anderson notes that "in the same year in which we dispatched five hundred thousand troops to the Arab world, the Foreign Service field school in Tunis could graduate only half a dozen Arabic-speakers." His implication is clear: if we had produced more of the latter over enough years, we might not have needed the former.

During a recent vacation on the Rhode Island shore, Chas Freeman imparted to me his vision of a smaller and more expert Foreign Service, perhaps along the lines of European ones, whose officers are all multilingual and street-wise—again, the Peace Corps model. An affectingly cocky and opinionated man who speaks Chinese and a half-dozen other languages in addition to Arabic, and who translated for President Nixon during Nixon's 1972 visit to China, Freeman gripes about a Foreign Service bureaucracy that now produces too much paperwork and too few language-proficient officers, and a Washington foreign-policy establishment that distracts everyone's attention with solecisms that don't relate to what the United States should or should not do, can or cannot do, in the field. "To focus more effectively on domestic policy, you've got to disengage politically from foreign policy while engaging in it at a more expert level on the ground overseas."

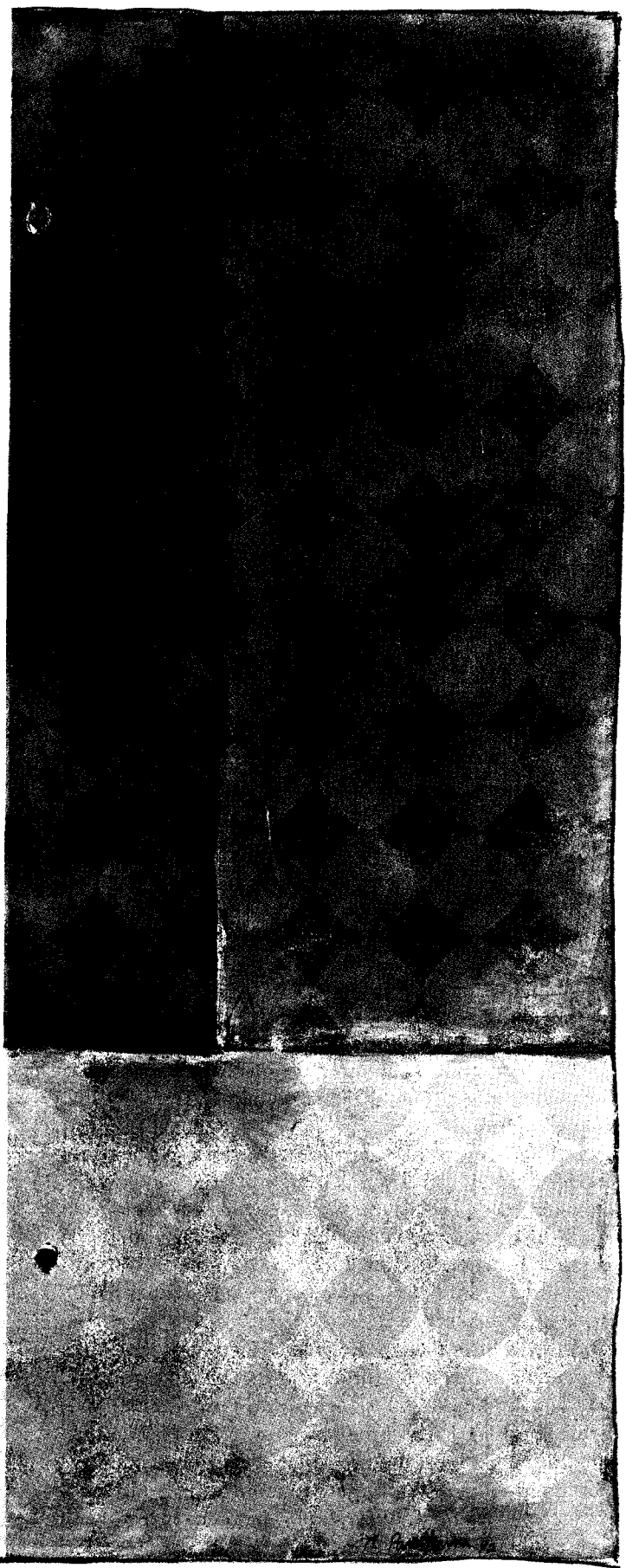
That is not to say that we need a cadre of independent operators. Even in the conduct of a diplomacy marked by diminished activism there is no substitute for clear objectives, clearly spelled out by Washington. But assuming that these exist, then the expertise and frontiersmanship of the Peace Corps veteran Jack McCreary—the wiser from his experience in Iraq—are the qualities we should look for in a post-Cold War Foreign Service. □



A Short Story

*Release*

by Xiaoda Xiao



I HAD BEEN TOLD HOURS AGO THAT I WOULD BE called to the reform office to get my release I.D. As soon as I got it, my term would be over and I would walk away, through the big iron gate, once again a free man, free to drop into any restaurant on the island and eat as much as I wanted. I was too hungry to be excited.

My sleep the night before had been restless and full of unmemorable dreams. I had been waiting with an empty stomach in the cement yard for more than ten hours.

Prisoners were usually released before lunchtime. On the day they went free, they customarily gave their morning rations to other inmates. As soon as they got out, they would enjoy a huge meal in the restaurant of their choice.

I had already given away my lunch ration, but I had not yet been summoned to the office. I had been watching the shadow of the high stone wall moving across the cement, however, and I thought that it had to be past three-thirty.

One of the inmates ran to me and said, "Hey, the chief wants you to come over to his office right away." Some of the prisoners in the cement yard whistled at me, and Wang, the No. 1 trusty, rising from the long iron bench, said, "Now, relax, lucky man."

I had been sitting on my bundle since early morning, when the barracks seemed to melt into the cold mists emerging from the lake. My legs felt numb, and I was dizzy as I tried to stand.

After lunch a group of prisoners returning from the washing sink had embraced me. Among them was Wang, who enthusiastically warned me that I mustn't eat too much for my first meal out of prison. He said a full meal would devastate a starved prisoner's empty stomach. On this day all the distrust between us had magically disappeared. Wang spoke to me as though to a close friend.

*He'd been warned to be cautious,
but after years of prison he intended to
enjoy his freedom fully*

The prisoners sat around, some on the bench, some right on the ground. Sanbao, who was searching for leftovers in the trash can, turned around and shouted, "Wait a minute! I don't understand. Control yourself before food? Nonsense! I'd rather control myself before a stark-naked girl."

"Shut up!" Wang barked at him. "Mind your own business."

In camp, rebelling against the No. 1 trusty was sometimes even worse than ignoring a prison officer. If you disobeyed the officer, you were put into a cell, but if you didn't yield to Wang's authority, you were given "tight shoes" to wear every day. A prisoner who went against Wang stood to lose everything.

Wang had been a carpenter before his arrest. No one knew much about his crime. He had already spent twelve years in the camp. He never went to the quarry. One inmate who did not give a damn for him was Zhang, a former university professor who had come to join us in the yard. With an angry crack in his voice Zhang said, "Nonsense. I would eat as much as I wanted to if I were he." Zhang was very popular in the camp. He had written letters to the Central Party Committee criticizing the Cultural Revolution. That was why he came to serve a ten-year term. Prisoners respected him, some even feared him, because he could eat a kilogram of lard together with a basin of rice powder without a break. No one else in the camp could do that. Of course, he had an extraordinarily large mouth. He was able to stuff one whole hand into his mouth, up to the wrist, without gagging. He loved to con newcomers out of their food by performing this trick for them. He wore a pair of glasses without the right ear-piece, tied around his right ear with a piece of string.

"You probably would. You are the top eater among us," Wang said, grinning.

"What do you mean by saying that a full meal would ruin a prisoner's stomach?" Zhang grew more angry.

"I mean it would ruin an ordinary stomach—I wouldn't say it would ruin yours if you were out of prison and going to a restaurant," Wang said slowly, still with a grin on his face.

Zhang had always been a problem for Wang. Could he give Zhang tight shoes, as he did the other prisoners who didn't respect him? Oh, no. It didn't work on Zhang. During his years in the prison camps Zhang had been put into solitary confinement five times. And his right leg had been broken by guards three years earlier, when he refused to obey an order to go stand against a wall. So now he was crippled. Yet, as he remarked, he never bent his spine to any power.

"Bullshit!" Zhang barked, and flew at Wang.

I stood by like a referee. Both the fighters turned quickly toward me. Their eyes were narrowed and wary. Zhang looked fiercer than Wang. The two of them circled facing each other, and Zhang bared his teeth and growled like a dog. His mouth was so enormous that I

imagined him biting Wang on the shoulder and tearing a big piece of flesh from the joint. Then Wang, taller than Zhang and taking advantage of his height, moved in quickly and seized Zhang by the collar.

"Bite!" he said in a quick breath. He was still grinning. His long, bare arms and fingers trembled as he held Zhang's collar.

At that moment the bell tolled for afternoon work. The fighters simultaneously loosened their grip on each other. Wang sank to the bench, and Zhang ran off to catch the line of prisoners heading for the quarry. But, as though he'd suddenly remembered something important, he came back to me.

"Take care, now. Don't believe what he said." He still hadn't caught his breath, and managed only broken curses at Wang, who relaxed on the bench as if nothing had happened. Zhang stared at Wang and said before leaving, "We'll have time later!"

MY RELEASE WAS APPARENTLY SCHEDULED for late in the afternoon. The chief had given me a lecture the night before and asked me two questions—why was I arrested and did I deserve my freedom—to which I had never been able to give satisfactory answers.

"You should think of the day you came here," the chief said. "It's certainly the most important day of your life."

I thought, How could I ever forget that day? My arrest was still so clear to me that it seemed to have happened yesterday. It had been like most other days. I had been playing the violin in my bedroom. I could still smell the familiar fragrance of Linan, my girlfriend, who had been there with me for most of the afternoon and had just left for home. The sun was going down, and the little room was starting to darken. Looking through the window, I saw the narrow path, bordered with drooping willows, leading away from the house. Beyond stood the ruins of the ancient gateway, which were already covered in shadows.

Carefully I moved the music stand close to the window, for the last light. I was about to turn the page to the next piece when I felt someone tap me on the shoulder. I thought that Linan had come back to pick up a book on the table. I was usually unaware of her entrance into my room until I heard her soft voice or felt her slender hand resting on my shoulder.

I moved a little toward the music stand in order to let her sit down on my bed. But someone snatched my violin away and knocked the bow violently onto the floor. Turning around, I saw three strangers in khaki. The tall man who stood closest to me took a pair of handcuffs from his black canvas bag and announced in a low but firm voice, "You are under arrest." The other two moved quickly to either side of me.

The tall man looked young and kind. I could tell by his accent that he had grown up in the same district of the city in which I had spent my boyhood. I wanted time to prepare. I was about to ask the tall man for a few minutes when I found that his face had hardened into a cold, wooden stare.

Several months before, I had bought a portrait of Chairman Mao from a local bookstore and had come back to hang it on my bedroom wall. That night I invited a few friends to my room to have a small party. Once seated, with my drink in front of me, I cursed Aunt Wu, the chairperson of the neighborhood committee, for having relentlessly pestered me to buy the portrait. I recalled that the first time she had entered my room she'd seemed surprised to see the bare white walls. She stared at them and then at me as though she'd discovered a terrible secret, and said, "Do you know that all the rooms except yours in the residential area have the Treasured Portrait hanging in them?" When she visited me two days later, she said, "Next time I drop in, I expect to see a Treasured Portrait hanging on the wall." The third time she stepped into my room, I was playing violin with three of my friends. She shouted behind us, "Stop playing that music. Go right now and get a 'Treasured Portrait or I'll let you know what 'the Proletarian Dictatorship' means!"

So I ran to the nearest bookstore and bought the portrait in which Chairman Mao, dressed in a military uniform, raised his right hand to wave at the Red Guard in greeting. His raised hand seemed especially large, and his smile was proud. I didn't much care for this image, with its powerful hand and self-indulgent smile, and the idea of it hanging on my bedroom wall bothered me. I couldn't help feeling that Mao was staring down at us while we played music—even worse, when I made love with Linan.

As I sat there at the table, I felt the wine and my anger blend into a rage. I tore the portrait into pieces. At that very moment Aunt Wu, without knocking, entered my room.

Had I been punished right then, I wouldn't have felt so shocked. What struck me was that they didn't arrest me at that time. I went to the police station the next day with Linan and gave a confession, as Aunt Wu had instructed. They told me to go back home and wait. Linan began visiting me more frequently, and almost every time she would say, "So, it has been all right today?"

It had been all right for three months. Then a campaign called "Digging the class enemy from every corner" began. Five percent of the population was to be arrested. In order to fill the percentage quota in my residential area, they should arrest five people. And I was one of the five. In terms of official classification, I belonged to "class enemy of the new generation."

During my time in the camp I was forced to read Mao's books. I could recite his words: "We are required to make different policies in different circumstances in

order to catch up with the development of class struggle." You could be free today but arrested tomorrow, simply because the situation had changed.

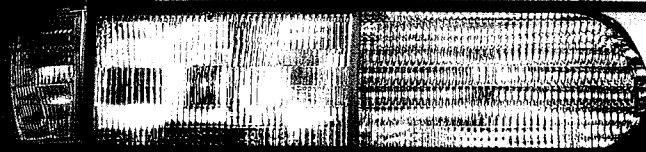
SO HERE I WAS IN THE PRISON YARD, WAITING. I faced the long one-story building of the camp, which was then as quiet as a temple. Looking through my group's door, I was able to see the bunk I'd slept on for five years and, above it, the one that Sanbao slept on. I had had to put up with the nasty smell of him since he'd moved there, the year before; he never took a bath, not even in summer. He had been in so long that he didn't see any reason to wash himself.

As I looked at the closely packed bunks, I was pleased to think I would be leaving behind Sanbao's foul smell. Behind me was a high gray stone wall topped with a foot of iron grillwork. A smooth path ascended the slope behind it. Twice a day I had walked up that path to the quarry, and twice a day I had come back, for the whole five years. When I walked along the path, I prayed to survive: every month three or four prisoners were killed by falling stone.

According to the customs of the prison camp, before being released—just as on my first day, when I had moved into the camp—I was to place all my things in the cement yard and let Wang check out everything, bit by bit.

"Don't frown like that. A five-year prison term is not long. Many guys here have got ten more years to go." This was what Wang had told me when he checked my stuff as I entered the camp. It was true. Five years seemed not to have been long as I recalled that day in this very yard. It was that simple: the five-year prison term had come to an end. I realized that my thoughts were much simpler now than they had been five years before. I had lost my interest in music. Even the fact that Linan had gotten married a few months earlier hardly shocked me. Now all I thought of was going to a small restaurant, the one on the village quay. From the top of the quarry the prisoners often gazed down at this restaurant, watching people go in and out and the smoke rise up from the long chimney behind it. We had talked about it almost every day when we saw the smoke coming out. All the prisoners in the camp, no matter where they came from, compared the length of their sentences and dreamed of the day of their release, when they could sit at a real table and eat their fill. Be he an artist, a scientist, or just a farmer, it made no difference: a prisoner would look at the smoke and the people coming out with full bellies and see his future. In my boyhood I'd had a dream of becoming a musician. How stupid I had been then.

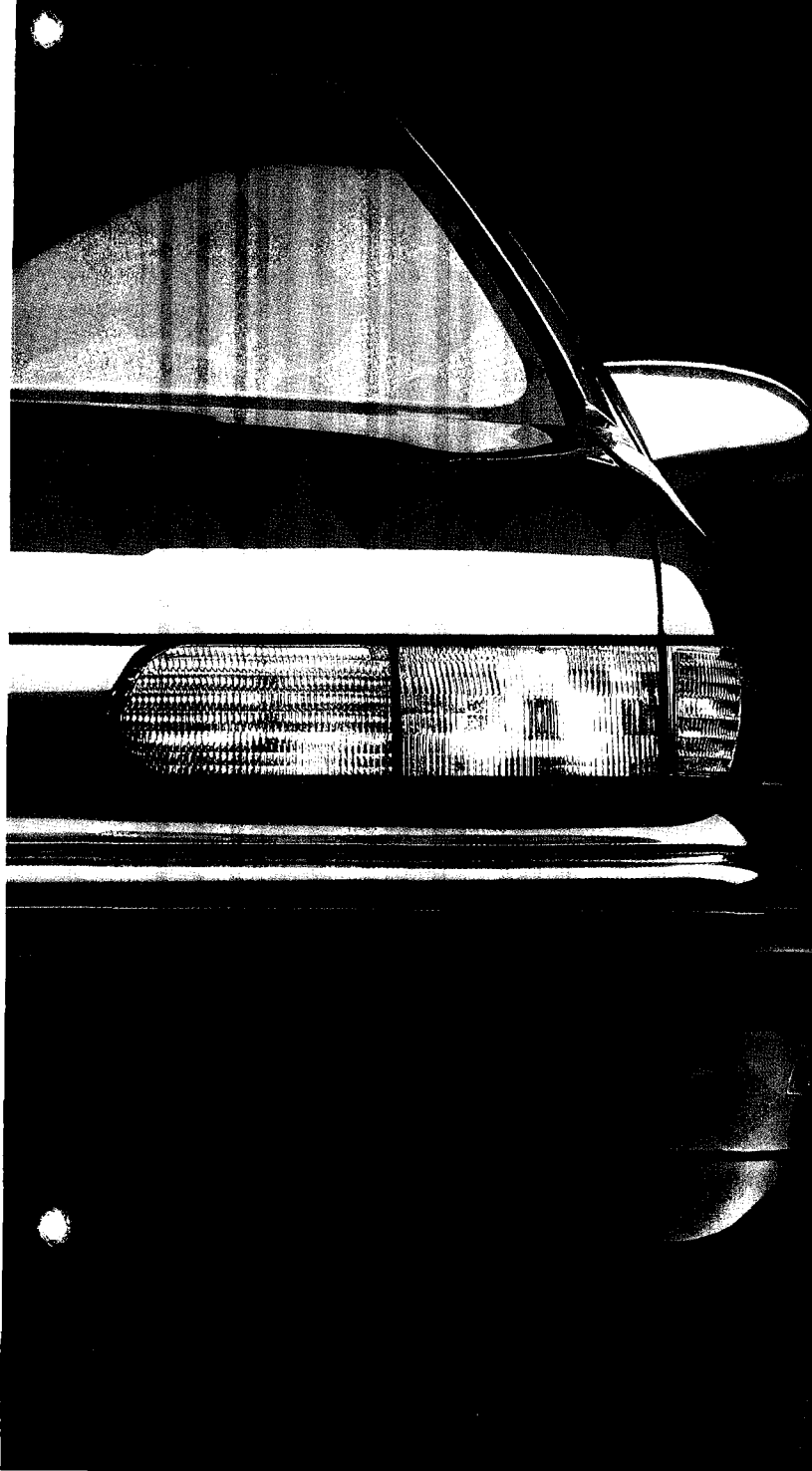
My mother had written to me frequently in the past few months, and in her letters she always complained about what I wrote back to her. "You seem to forget all the words that you learned in school. Your handwriting has been get-



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HAVE YOU
DRIVEN
A FORD
LATELY?



ting worse and worse. And in each of your letters I find at least ten grammar mistakes. . . ." Mother could not have understood that for five years a small restaurant had embodied my ambitions and all the wonders of freedom.

As Wang began to check my things, I noticed five local girls with bamboo containers on their backs walking down the slope toward camp. I recognized the two girls in the lead. I remembered that I had talked with them two or three months earlier, when the prisoners went to see a movie at the main square of the camp headquarters. I had boasted to them that I owned six brand-new jackets and many new pairs of stockings. They were intrigued; local girls never wore stockings except during festivals. But the truth was that I had nothing decent in my wooden case or in my bundle, which was now opened and spread on the ground. I felt uneasy and hurried to the lavatory, where I had often hidden myself in order to avoid the thought-reform classes at night. When I came out of the lavatory a few minutes later, the girls were gone.

The only thing I was leaving behind was a small wooden box I had given to Sanbao the night before. Sanbao had tried many times to pry this box open with his chopsticks, but had never succeeded. The box, which I always put beside my pillow, was where I kept my rice powder, which had wafted from every joint and encircled my head. Sanbao had always sniffed deeply and cursed, "Oh, my God! I can't live without it. I can't sleep!" The night before, while packing, I had seen him staring at the box again. Only a little rice powder was inside, but I offered it to him anyway. Sanbao seemed grateful, for he helped me with the rest of my stuff right after I gave him the box. "You're the guy that I've regarded as my only friend here, though I never said it to you before. I'm not just trying to flatter you."

"You're not?" I said.

"We'll meet again outside the prison if I can survive my term, and by that time we'll be able to eat as much as we like in the restaurant," Sanbao said joyfully.

Thinking of the meal, I felt my mouth begin to water. I tried to calm myself. What if something at the last moment prevented my release? Such things happen. Two weeks earlier a prisoner had come to the end of his term, only to be told to stay in camp until he finished the work that he'd left undone during his eight years here—quarrying two thousand tons of stone. The task would take him at least a hundred days. I had never failed in five years to mine my daily stone ration. But what about my thought-reform course? I had never been able to give a satisfactory answer as to why I had been arrested. I knew that I wouldn't be able to survive such a setback, and would collapse in no time. I began to prepare myself for the worst. That's what all prisoners do.

I walked slowly toward the reform office, my bundle and my wooden case in either hand. My old leather boots grated on the cement. My hunger and tiredness had gone, and I felt a sudden strength surge through my legs,

as though I could run right out through the gates and into the fields beyond.

A hundred or more prisoners stopped working and fixed their envious eyes on my back. "Look at the guy," they would say. "He is going to the small restaurant." Two newcomers, who had arrived the previous day, stopped as they were walking along the slope, and looked at me. Both held iron rakes in their hands. Both looked pale and thin. As I looked into their eyes, I could read the number of years they had to serve. I stopped and nodded a good-bye to them. They nodded back silently.

The chief was enjoying a cup of tea at his large black desk, which was almost identical to the one behind which the judge who sentenced me had been seated. When I entered the reform office, the chief seemed to ignore me utterly. As an old-timer, I knew what to do before the authorities. Don't touch their nerves. Wait patiently for them, but don't make them wait for you. The chief's face was totally in shadow, so I couldn't gauge his mood. Finally he put aside his cup and said, "Come here." I sensed some hostility in his voice. I walked up to the big desk and stood in front of the chief, holding my breath.

"Do you know you're getting out today?" he said.

"Yes."

"What are you thinking now?"

I tried to say something, but no words came. What was I thinking about? I suddenly thought that everything would have been different if I hadn't torn up the portrait of Chairman Mao and given myself up to the police. "You must be thinking of your meal outside," the chief said.

"Yes, I am," I confessed.

"How did you do with your thought reform?"

"Well enough."

"Tell me why you were arrested and if you deserve your freedom."

I was sick of this question. Why was I arrested? It was very simple: I was arrested because of the percentage quota, because of the requirement of the political situation. But if I spoke out, the chief wouldn't let me go. So I said, "I have washed my criminal soul with my sweat in hard labor during my five-year term here."

"Don't forget that you have once been a counterrevolutionary," the chief said.

"I won't," I said.

The chief took out my release I.D. together with eighty yuans from his drawer. "Be careful with them," he said. I was allowed to leave.

WHEN I PASSED THROUGH THE MAIN ENTRANCE of the prison, I stopped to show my I.D. to the guard. He looked me up and down for a long while before he checked my I.D. Then he yelled, "Pass!"

I walked out and trudged along a dirt road toward a small town in which, I remembered vaguely, a winding

street led to the quay. But I had first passed the street long ago, on my way to the prison camp. Now I had to look right and left to make sure that I was going in the right direction.

A large portrait of Mao at the entrance to the street drew my attention. The portrait was on a cement board about five feet high. The background was peeling away and I saw a rip as big as half my palm right on Mao's chin. Beneath the portrait a quotation from Mao was printed clearly in red: "Never forget—struggle!" But the other part of the slogan was hidden by a woman's pink underwear and blue skirt, which hung on a long piece of bamboo pole sticking out of a nearby window. All I could see was "Revolution is not a dinner party!"

Something might have changed. Mother had written to me recently that Aunt Wu had been friendly to her. "She promised to help you get odd jobs when you come home," Mother said. In another letter Mother wrote, "Yesterday morning when I went to the market street, I met Aunt Wu again. She said that she had gone to a Buddhist temple three times to burn incense. And she asked me to go there with her to burn incense for you." I didn't much believe in Buddhist grace, but when I stopped before the ripped portrait of Mao and the woman's underwear, which was waving gently in the wind, I felt at ease.

Then I reached the street. I followed two young women who stepped out of a beauty parlor; they were talking about the latest fashions. A group of children with bags on their backs were playing hide-and-seek on the corner ahead. An old man in gray, with a hopeful look on his face, was bending to dig through a rubbish heap. People seemed not to know that a labor camp was only several hundred yards away from their community. The two women turned into a lane. I walked along the street. I felt my shirt and jacket soaked through with sweat, but I didn't stop walking.

At the inn I asked an old man where I could store my luggage. The old man looked me up and down just like the prison guard and got up from his chair. "For how long?"

"Just overnight," I said.

The old man took me to a house next to the inn and said, "Here you are."

The house was filled with the stench of chemical fertilizer.

"That's it?" I asked.

"Yes."

"But this room stinks!"

"You can take your things somewhere else."

I went back to the inn to reserve a bed for my first night out of prison. I had to show my I.D. again. But I was not treated as sternly as in prison. A well-dressed young woman put my name in the lodgers' book while talking excitedly to a young man about some furniture that she'd happened to see in a show when she visited Shanghai the day before. She said that she'd like her

wedding room to be furnished like that. And the young man promised to buy it as soon as possible. Raising her eyes from the ledger, she asked me, "Light brown is in fashion, isn't it?" I didn't know any fashion. But I nodded my head.

When I walked out, I felt reassured, because I didn't have to show my release I.D. to anyone else on the island and because the small restaurant, though not yet open, was right there on the opposite corner. Through the large windows I could see the dishes arranged on the counter. Green pepper with pork, fried chicken, yellow fish, and meatballs.

I went to a store next to the restaurant and bought a pack of cigarettes. Then I stood in front of the restaurant window. When I was almost finished with my cigarette, the restaurant opened.

I ordered five dishes and bought a bottle of liquor. I found myself a table in a vacant room that looked grubby and bleak. On the wall on the left side of the room was a portrait of Chairman Mao, smiling at me as I stepped in with my bottle. Everything looked lousy and old. The wooden table was greasy; one of the two chairs was missing its backrest; the other had lost its crossbars underneath. The portrait had already turned yellow and bore many dark spots, no doubt from the smoke of the stove, whose chimney poked through the ceilingless roof. On the opposite side was a set of long, narrow windows in the style of the Ming dynasty, and two large spider webs hung in the upper corners of each. I could see into another dining room, next to mine; its four tables were covered with tablecloths and all the chairs were brand-new. I preferred the one I was in, however, because I don't like people watching me at my meal.

So I sat on the chair without crossbars. "Dinner, dinner," I murmured, picking up a pair of chopsticks. Then I rubbed the bare wooden table with my sleeves and poured myself a glass of liquor. A wonderful smell came floating through the room from behind me. Turning around, I saw a young waitress in a white apron bringing out a tray. She had two plates of food: one was fried fish, and the other was green pepper with pork. As she put them down on the table, I saw clearly that her slender fingers looked like Linan's and her bare arms, also like Linan's, were covered with a layer of fine brown hair.

In all the years in camp I hadn't had a chance to see a woman's hands up close. Now, as I watched the waitress's hands moving gently before me, I truly felt free.

I put two pieces of fried fish into my mouth and drank a toast to my freedom. The room seemed bright now. Through the windows I saw a bank of old timbers topped with broken tiles. I remembered a similar pile of rafters in front of my own room at home. Under those rafters had been a stone-paved area where I used to gather with my friends when I was a little boy. Sometimes we didn't go to school, and instead hid our bags in one of the holes among the wall's ruins. Then we went to play fighting

games on the ground. But we were silent with worry by the time it grew late. Someone among us would have to remind the others to take our bags out of the hole. As we left, each of us was trying to construct an alibi for his parents. I remembered that I had taken Linan to visit some of my friends, and to the place where I used to hide my backpack. She seemed very interested in the game I had played with the other boys. She said, "I would not have wasted my childhood if I had been able to play with you in those days."

We treasured our time together. Sometimes we sat side by side under those old timber rafters. Sometimes, when it was raining outside, we spent hours in my room, gazing at the rain dripping from the edges of the rafters. The soft sound was like distant music. I seemed to hear the music again.

"Do you hear the sound of the raindrops outside?" Linan whispered to me, leaning against my shoulder.

"Yes," I said.

"I like to stay here with you and watch the raindrops fall from the rafters," she said.

We were sitting in my room and looking through the window at the rain outside. We were silent. All was quiet but the raindrops.

The past continued to appear soundlessly in my thoughts: Behind my room was a long, narrow canal. During summer days young girls from nearby villages steered their boats skillfully with bamboo poles into the crisscross canal. They would shout, "Lotus seeds! Lotus roots! Three bunches for a yuan." Then I remembered how my grandpa would often take me to the serene gardens in my home town. I was fascinated by the bonsai: "scenery in pots." Grandpa would point to a tiny tree in a pot and tell me that it might be five hundred years old. My favorite goldfish were there in all shapes and colors: red lion-heads, black pearls, and purple skirts, swimming leisurely in those huge ponds in the gardens.

I grasped the rough edge of the table and felt myself almost carried away by this wave of memory washing over me.

I filled my glass again and swallowed the whole glassful. I was about to finish the pork when the young waitress came over with the rest of my food. I tried to rise from the chair to help her, but I failed. Then I tried to say something to her. I felt my mouth move, but no words came out. She turned back quickly and left.

I unfastened the top button of my shirt. I concentrated on the new dishes: one was fried chicken, and the other two were meatballs. Each of the two dishes held six meatballs. During my five years in the camp I had eaten only three meatballs. Each prisoner got one on Spring Festival Day each year. I should have had five, but two of

them had been stolen by Sanbao. How I had longed for those meatballs.

I heard music coming from next door. I stopped eating and listened. Then I held one chopstick with my right hand as if I were holding a bow and played an invisible violin there in the shabby room.

At that very moment I felt someone tap me gently on the shoulder. Turning around, I saw a middle-aged man standing behind me. He had a serious expression on his face.

"I'm the manager of this restaurant," he said, introducing himself.

"I'm eating here by myself," I said, and hit the table with my chopstick.

"I know. I have to tell you to stop drinking right now, or you'll have to get out."

"Why?" I asked him.

"Have you heard the news over the radio just now?" the manager asked me.

"I'm not interested in any news on the radio."

"Well, I'll tell you what," the manager said. "It is the saddest moment for all the people in this country. Our great leader, Chairman Mao, passed away this morning." He paused for a while and then went on. "All kinds of entertainment should be stopped for two weeks. You have to stop enjoying your drink and your food . . ."

We remained face to face for a few seconds at the table on which half the fried chicken and my twelve meatballs remained untouched. Then I turned my head in order to calm myself down. On the wall Chairman Mao's face smiled at me.

"It's my dinner. It's not entertainment." I turned back and raised a finger at the manager.

At that moment the waitress came. She handed me two paper bags and said, "You can take them home." Then she took my glass and the bottle still half filled with liquor. The waitress had not spoken to me before. Her voice sounded so soft and sweet that I couldn't show my anger in front of her. I watched her putting my meatballs into a paper bag, hoping that she would give me a look, too.

She did look at me. But it was not the knowing look I had expected. She looked at me with a wooden stare, like that of the tall man who had arrested me five years ago.

It was raining when I walked out of the restaurant, and the cold wind cleared my mind. For a moment I gazed at the paper bags in my hands. Then I turned around and threw them at a haystack.

The evening was dark and windy. Not a soul was in sight. Suddenly the funeral march sounded from the loudspeakers hanging on the cement poles every few hundred feet in the street ahead. □

ONE THOUSANDTH OF A SECOND

BY GUY BILLOUT





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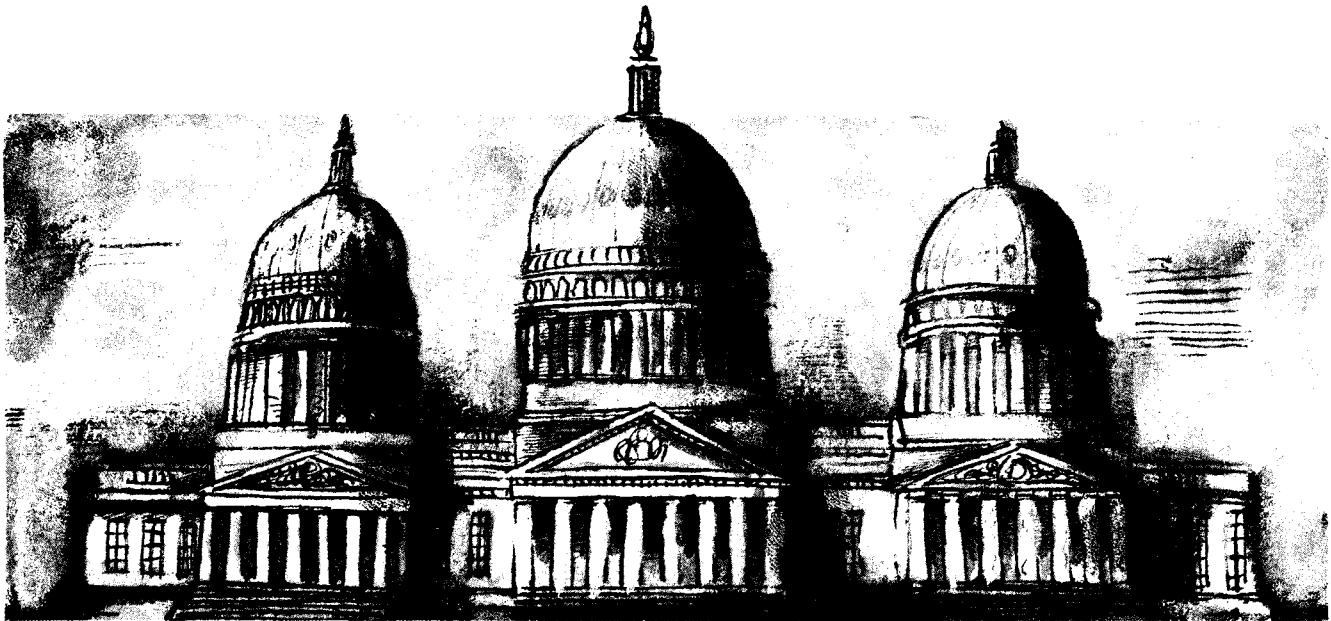
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From the term-limitation movement to the rise of Ross Perot, the signs of discontent with the political status quo are everywhere. Our author outlines a plan to channel that discontent in an innovative direction, one that would make the House of Representatives more democratic and more responsive to the variety of opinion to be found in the country and that would break the monopoly on power enjoyed by the two parties. "Because of our peculiar electoral law," he writes, "the American government is divided between two parties. The American people are not"

A RADICAL PLAN TO CHANGE AMERICAN POLITICS

BY MICHAEL LIND



THE WORLD HAS CHANGED, AMERICA HAS changed—but the United States Congress has not. And because Congress hasn't changed, more and more people feel alienated from government, and the silent crisis of legitimacy, which figures as a haunting leitmotif in so many of our other crises, intensifies. The size of the House of Representatives has been the same since 1910. And America's archaic and undemocratic system of electing, by plurality, one member of Congress per district—an eighteenth-century anachronism long since abandoned by most European democracies—has scarcely been questioned in the entire period since 1789.

This kind of acquiescence in tradition—pious if you approve of it, mindless if you do not—might be justified if the U.S. Congress were an effective and popular institution. The consensus of its inmates and its constituents, however, is that Congress does not work. Widespread discontent with the political system could have been ex-

pected to produce proposals for reform of the legislative branch, and it has. Unfortunately, the most familiar proposals for reforming Congress would do so at the expense of democracy.

Three Bad Ideas

BAD IDEA NO. 1 IS TERM LIMITATION. WHY SHOULD any constituency be prevented from sending the same representative or senator back to Washington again and again? The direct election of U.S. senators, brought about by the Seventeenth Amendment, did not, as advertised, eliminate corporate influence on legislative politics. Only the very naive believe that the same promised result—the sidelining of "special interests" and the filling of the legislature with public-spirited citizen-legislators—will be produced by frequent rotation. In a capital city in which expertise is power, the frequent circulation of amateur legislators

would only increase the relative influence of the permanent congressional staff, the federal bureaucracy, and the entrenched Washington establishment of lobbyists and insiders.

The misguided panacea of the moment, term limitation joins two long-standing proposals for congressional reform, one associated with the left, the other with the right. For much of the twentieth century Progressives, New Dealers, and then left liberals, in the name of "responsible party government," have dreamed of reforming the United States to resemble an idealized Britain—bad idea No. 2. (Ironically, today constitutional reformers in Britain are seeking a new system with many "American" features, such as federalism, judicial review, and a written constitution.) Those who seek to reform Congress along parliamentary lines are not concerned about the separation of powers, an antiquated system they deride. Instead, they favor the "separation of parties." In their view, the American mass electorate should be given a clear choice between two sharply defined ideological parties; a party that wins a bare majority in the House, the Senate, and the presidential election should be given *carte blanche* to govern with as few impediments to the exercise of power as possible, rolling over not only the opposition party but also dissidents within the majority party itself.

If a parliamentary Congress was the dream of midcentury liberals when it appeared that the Democratic Party would control all three branches forever, the recent inability of Republicans to elect congressional majorities has created a constituency on the American right for bad idea No. 3—what can almost be described as presidential rule. Effectively abandoning any hope of ever recapturing Congress, many Republicans have favored strengthening the power of partisan Presidents to alter policy directly, through executive orders, rather than the old-fashioned way—by pressing for the repeal or the amendment of laws.

Since Richard Nixon began the present era of Republican presidential dominance, Republican claims for "inherent" executive prerogative have grown ever more extravagant (recycling the arguments of Democratic presidentialists in the era from Franklin Roosevelt to Lyndon Johnson). President George Bush has claimed vast powers in domestic as well as foreign policy. In addition to asserting that he had the power to wage war in the Persian Gulf without congressional approval, he has declared that he will not enforce provisions that he considers unconstitutional in laws that he has signed. Some conservatives even argue that Bush should exercise a supposed "inherent" line-item veto that has been read into the Constitution (where, somehow, it has eluded discovery since the days of George Washington, who observed, "From the nature of the Constitution, I must approve all the parts of a bill, or reject it, in toto").

Further magnification of discretionary White House

power—even in the service of legitimate goals—runs the danger of creating a North American form of Latin American plebiscitary presidentialism, in which a demagogic *Presidente* circumvents a weak legislature and rules by fiat, in the name of a "mandate" from the national electorate.

Many of the problems of Congress that term limiters, parliamentary reformers, and presidential-power enthusiasts seek to address are genuine: swollen congressional staffs and perks, arrogance by entrenched committee chairmen, subservience to wealthy and well-organized lobbies, micromanagement of executive agencies by incompetent or venal legislators. These abuses cry out for remedies—but for *republican* remedies.

A Good Idea

OTHER REFORMS OF CONGRESS CAN EXTEND rather than restrict democracy in America. One is an overdue increase in the size of the House of Representatives.

In 1789 the first House of Representatives had sixty-five members, each representing about 30,000 inhabitants (and far fewer qualified voters). Anti-Federalist opponents of the new federal Constitution protested that districts of 30,000 were too large: congressmen would be far too remote from the concerns of their constituents (the constituencies in most state legislatures at the time were much smaller). One of the Federalist papers (No. 55) is devoted to justifying such enormous districts.

Today each of the 435 members of the House represents about twenty times as many voters as the first representatives did. Whereas the United States has, on average, one representative for roughly every 600,000 inhabitants, the ratio in Japan is one to 238,600, in Germany one to 120,000, in France one to 96,300, and in Britain one to 87,500. Obviously, the disparity is due largely to the differences in population between the United States and other Western countries, but the number of representatives also plays a role. The U.S. House of Representatives is small by Western democratic standards. Germany's newly revised Bundestag has 662 members, the British House of Commons 651 members, France's National Assembly 577 members, and Japan's lower house of the Diet 512 members.

There is nothing sacred about 435, the number at which the House of Representatives has been frozen by law since 1929. In the intervening six decades the United States has more than doubled in population. A vote for a representative, therefore, counts less than half as much in 1992 as it did in 1929—and a twentieth as much as it did in 1792. The weight of a vote will continue to decline: fifty years from now the average congressional district may include 750,000 people. Already, Montana has gone to court to challenge the present apportionment system, which would give the huge state only one congressional seat, representing 800,000 people. What is more, at

the rate that the U.S. population is growing, in the foreseeable future a fifth of the states may have only one representative—and a third only two or one.

Clearly, the membership of the House cannot be increased in direct proportion to the population. If the original 30,000-member constituencies had been retained, by today there would be more than 8,000 representatives. (The House would have to meet in a stadium.) Nevertheless, moderate increases in House size can help limit the dilution of democracy caused by population growth. If the experience of other Western democracies is any guide, a 500-member House would not be unmanageable, nor would a 600-member House. The House is not the Senate; it loses its special function as districts grow too large and representatives find themselves ever more remote from their constituencies. If there is an argument against moderate increases in House membership beyond 435, it must be more compelling than mere tradition. Sixty-three years is not time immemorial.

Proportional Representation

THE COMPARATIVELY SMALL number of representatives in the popular branch of the U.S. legislature is not, however, the only respect in which the United States is less democratic than the countries of Western Europe.

Electoral systems can be divided into two fundamental varieties: the plurality, or "winner-take-all," method and the party-list method, with proportional representation (PR). Under the plurality system a representative is elected by a simple plurality (or in some cases a majority) of voters in a single-member district. In contrast, in PR systems the country is divided into multimember districts (in a small country such as Israel, the entire nation may be a single district). Several parties present lists of candidates within each multimember district; the electorate casts its votes for the parties, rather than the candidates; and then the seats are allocated among the parties, on the basis of the proportion they received of the total vote.

The United States has inherited the plurality method from Britain, which maintains it as well (Australia has broken with the British tradition in favor of more-modern methods). The Anglo-American method makes possible distortions of the democratic process which are simply impossible under PR. Imagine a country with a plurality

system in which there are two major parties, X and Y. Those who vote for party X, even if they make up no more than 51 percent of the voters in each single-member district, may elect 100 percent of the representatives; those voting for party Y, although they constitute 49 percent of the population, *may end up with no representatives at all*. Now suppose that X and Y are joined by a third party, Z. If in every district X receives 40 percent of the vote, Y 38 percent, and Z 22 percent, X will control every seat in the legislature, even though 60 percent of the population voted for other parties.

These examples may seem extreme, but there are cases in which plurality systems have elected one party even though another received a greater number of votes. For

example, in 1974 the British Conservative Party lost its majority of seats in the House of Commons, even though it received 300,000 more votes than the Labour Party. In the latest British election John Major's Conservative Party retained a majority in the House of Commons, even though a majority of British voters cast votes for parties other than the Conservatives.

Similar distortions exist in the United States. In 1990 the Republican Party won 45 percent of the popular vote but was reduced to 38 percent of the seats in the House. The Democrats, with 53 percent of the popular vote, received 61 percent of the seats. As in Britain, a strong third-party challenge could permit a minority of American voters to elect a majority of members of Congress. Nothing remotely comparable to these distortions is possible under proportional representation.

Another advantage of PR is the way it makes gerrymandering difficult or impossible. In multimember districts every party or voting bloc will be represented more or less in proportion to its strength in the entire electorate, regardless of how the district lines are drawn. It is only in plurality systems, in which an area of several blocks may make the difference between losing everything and winning everything by a few percentage points, that there is a strong incentive to gerrymander.

Along with partisan gerrymandering, today's government-mandated racial gerrymandering could be eliminated by PR—without curtailing the voting power of ethnic minorities. Federal courts have gone from striking down a "strangely irregular twenty-eight-sided" district drawn to prevent black voters from pooling their strength to requiring the creation of equally strange districts to encour-

WHAT WOULD IT TAKE
TO INSTALL PROPORTIONAL
REPRESENTATION FOR
MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES?
NOTHING MORE THAN AN ACT
OF CONGRESS.

lation that, divided into nine single-member districts, now returns nine Democrats, each with a slight plurality in his district, might, if organized into a nine-member district with PR, send four Democrats, three Republicans, one Libertarian, and one Conservative to Congress—with the same votes cast. By the same token, Democrats who today waste their votes in largely Republican areas might be able to elect a minority of a consolidated multimember district's congressional delegation. Many voters who today are resigned to never electing a congressman of their party or their philosophy, simply because they happen to belong to permanent electoral minorities in their local communities, would suddenly be able to help elect one or more representatives, without changing either their residence or their views.

Multimember districts are nothing new in the United States. Combined with both plurality elections and PR, they have long been used at the state and municipal levels. For example, from 1870 to 1980 the cumulative vote within three-member districts (similar to PR) was used to elect legislators to the Illinois Assembly. As early as 1867 Senator Charles Buckalew proposed that cumulative voting for House elections be imposed by Congress on reconstructed southern states seeking readmission to the Union; following this experiment, either cumulative voting or proportional representation (which he thought too complex for the Americans of his day to comprehend!) could be adopted nationwide. That his proposed reform got nowhere was a tragedy not only for the black, white Republican, and Populist electoral minorities in the South, who were soon effectively disenfranchised by the

dominant Democrats, but for the country as a whole, which might have adopted PR by the turn of the century, as many European democracies had.

What about the states that are so sparsely populated that they have only one congressman apiece? PR works only when districts elect multiple members—at least two or three, and preferably more than four or five. At present six states have such small populations that they have only one representative apiece (Alaska, Delaware, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, and Wyoming). Perhaps single-member states would elect their representatives under a plurality system. Still, it seems unfair not to allow their citizens the benefits of PR. The fairest approach would be to increase the number of representatives to give these states more representatives.

These proposals may seem radical. They are. Established institutions need be accorded respect only to the degree that they have earned it. In this case it is difficult to argue with the political scientist Theodore Lowi that “nothing about the present American party system warrants the respect it receives.”

Discontent is manifested not only by third-party challenges but also by split-ticket voting, a practice that expresses the inability of many Americans to identify completely with either national party. In 1988, for example, a quarter of the Ohio voters who voted for George Bush also voted for the liberal Democratic senator Howard Metzenbaum. Split-ticket voting like this has produced today's deadlocked government. The blame lies with a party system that does not allow the preferences of substantial numbers of Americans to be expressed.

Because of our peculiar electoral law, the U.S. government is divided between two parties. The American people are not.

The Cumulative Vote and Congressional Leadership

THE PRINCIPLE BEHIND PR—THE REPRESENTATION of electoral minorities *as minorities* in the government—would be thwarted if it were not carried through to the selection of the leaders of the legislature. The instrument to carry it through is the cumulative vote.

The technique of cumulative voting was devised by corporate lawyers to ensure minority-shareholder representation on the board of directors of a corporation. The technique gives a voting bloc a choice, whether to distribute its votes among all the candidates who are to be elected to the board at the same time, or to pool its votes, in order to be sure of electing one or several candidates. The theory is that it is better to be represented by a minority on the board than not to be represented at all.

Cumulative voting could easily be applied to the selection of both the House and the Senate leadership. Under the present system for selecting the speaker of the House



and the Senate majority leader, whatever party or faction controls a bare majority of each body can control the leadership and elect all the committee chairmen. Suppose, however, that each house of Congress were run by a leadership committee. Suppose further that each representative or senator did not have to cast one vote for each committee position but could cast all his or her votes for one candidate. Minorities within each house could then elect members to the leadership committees.

Why should a party that controls 51 percent of the seats in a legislature control 100 percent of the chairmanships of legislative committees? Why should 49 percent of the population go unrepresented in the congressional leadership, merely because they are 49 rather than 51 percent? Why should there be a revolution in committee leadership in a closely divided House if, say, half a dozen districts return representatives belonging to the former minority party?

Life is full of crude approximations, and the ancient convention that treats a 51 percent majority as a surrogate for the whole might be tolerable if there were not an alternative. But there is: the cumulative vote.

Extremism—or Consensus?

COMPARED WITH PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION, the Anglo-American plurality method is so manifestly unfair that it must be justified in terms of other values. Most of the criticism of PR is directed at multiparty systems, which PR is thought—correctly—to promote. Plurality systems tend to encourage two parties to dominate, while PR systems generally reward the formation of small parties.

Some claim that the multiparty democracy encouraged by PR is “undemocratic,” because coalition-building is undertaken in the legislature by minority parties, rather than within broad, would-be-majority parties before winner-take-all elections. Insofar as smaller parties must make more compromises than large parties in order to get their programs passed, PR is said to deny voters the right to choose between two clearly defined party platforms, one of which has the chance of becoming the platform of a stable legislative majority. This assumes, however, that there is no logrolling in two-party systems. It also assumes that most voters identify wholly with one or the other party. In reality, Americans, to the extent that they vote for parties rather than individual candidates, choose one party over the other because it is the lesser of two evils, not because they fully endorse the national party’s positions on all issues. The addition of new parties would increase the chances that voters could find representatives who shared most or all of their values and concerns.

The charge that a multiparty system leads to governmental instability is untrue for a country like the United States, whose government is based on the separation of powers. In multiparty parliamentary regimes, because the

Prime Minister and executive officers belong to the parties in the dominant coalition, the entire government may fall if a small party defects. In such a system a small extremist party may be able to exact major concessions on policy, as the price of its joining a coalition. Reportedly, in the spring of 1990, for example, a single Brooklyn rabbi, by virtue of his influence over a tiny religious party, prevented the formation of a legislative coalition in Israel’s Knesset. This kind of instability would remain impossible in the United States, where the President would continue to be elected by the plurality system, and would serve for a fixed term no matter what multiparty coalitions formed in the House of Representatives. Israel, now on the way to adopting direct elections for the Prime Minister, is moving away from parliamentary instability toward a system like the one I advocate, combining the separation of powers with PR for elections to a popular legislative chamber.

New Parties

IT IS ANYONE’S GUESS WHAT THE PARTIES IN A HOUSE elected by PR would be. (The Senate would continue to be elected the way it is now, and such effect as there would be on it would be indirect.) Although voters might continue to identify with the two major parties for a time, dissidents would soon learn that third-party votes were not wasted.

The largest party in the House might well be the Republicans. As it is, their party, with its homogeneous and stable group of core voters and centralized, disciplined organization, is far more like a European party than the Democratic Party is. If PR were adopted, the Republicans might lose their right wing to a new conservative party or parties, but the number of right-wing Republican voters is fairly small (as the Patrick Buchanan campaign unintentionally demonstrated, by adding only single-digit figures to large protest votes). The Republicans might compensate for their loss by becoming a more consistently classical-liberal party—pro-business, pro-choice—and attracting fiscally conservative social liberals who now identify with a Democrat like Paul Tsongas. Such a neoliberal Republican Party might hold steady at 35 to 40 percent of the House.

The Democratic Party, an incoherent coalition of smaller proto-parties, lobbies, interest groups, and machines, which are brought together only by the winner-take-all logic of our electoral system, would, however, probably disintegrate. The breakup of the Democratic Party as the result of PR would not mean that the power of today’s Democratic voters would decline. On the contrary, the kind of moderate Democrats represented by the Democratic Leadership Council, freed from the electoral necessity of appeasing ethnic and liberal lobbies, might well prosper. Together with “Reagan Democrats” wooed back from the Republican presidential coalition, moderate Democrats in Congress might form a Populist

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Party equivalent to Christian Democratic parties in Europe. Slightly right of center on social issues and foreign policy, slightly left of center on middle-class benefits, such a party could be expected to draw substantial support from Northeastern ethnics, middle- and lower-middle-class whites and Hispanics in the South and West, and perhaps socially conservative blacks. It would be heavily Catholic. A Populist Party might be the nearest rival to the Republicans for the status of largest party in the House.

The United States, unlike Europe, probably would not have a strong Social Democratic Party, given the low level of unionization and the lack of a mainstream socialist intellectual tradition here. There might nevertheless be something that called itself the Social Democratic Party, representing unions, farmers, public-sector employees. Heavily black and Hispanic, such a party would favor protectionism and government subsidies to industry.

A small American Green Party would almost certainly arise from the decomposition of the Democrats. Appealing to New Age environmentalists, pacifists, feminists, and gay-rights activists, such a party might have trouble winning five percent of the vote in successive elections. So might other fringe parties that are easy to imagine: the Conservatives, a far right-fundamentalist alliance; the Multicultural Coalition, a coalition of ethnic-separatist parties; and anti-tax Libertarians.

Carrying this speculative exercise one step further, we might assign percentages of House membership to these hypothetical parties. Based on European experience and American political subcultures, the pattern might be as follows: Republicans (40 percent), Populists (30 percent), Social Democrats (15 percent), Greens (5 percent), Conservatives (5 percent), Multiculturalists and Libertarians (5 percent between them).

One question that immediately comes to mind is, Would a multiparty system exaggerate the power of small, extremist parties in the House? The danger that such parties might hold the key to House leadership would be eliminated by the leadership reforms proposed above. If the position of speaker of the House rotated among the members of a leadership committee elected by cumulative vote, moderate parties would be assured of exercising power in their turn and having substantial weight on the leadership committees, without having to make any compromises with extremists.

The chances that tiny fringe parties would win significant representation would be limited by the division of the country into multimember districts. The danger of extremism could also be guarded against by setting a threshold for participation in the legislature. Germany's requirement that parties get five percent of the nationwide vote, for example, has been enough to exclude both the neo-Nazi Republicans and the radical-left Greens. Anyone who argues for a higher threshold should explain just which 10 or 20 percent of his fellow citizens are so dangerous that they should be effectively disenfranchised.

It is extremely doubtful that PR could bring black-nationalist or white-supremacist parties to power in the House. Since blacks constitute only 12 percent of the

population, and an even smaller proportion of the electorate, most black voters would have to support an extremist party for it to clear a five-percent threshold. It seems unlikely that they would, because more-moderate multiracial parties would more accurately reflect the economic concerns and values of most black voters. Even if a black-nationalist party passed the five-percent hurdle, it could be kept out of the House leadership. To elect one member to a five-member leadership committee, at least 17 percent of the House membership would be necessary. Black radicals would have to form coalitions with nonblacks.

What about white Klansmen and neo-Nazis? Right-wing nationalist parties have made gains in recent European elections, but these are protest votes by moderate voters who seek to change particular policies of centrist parties, not to replace those parties permanently with extremists. In the United States the support for

Buchanan's extreme conservatism, even in the Republican Party, appears to have been in the single digits, and support for David Duke-style racism vanishingly small. This suggests that the only viable far-right parties in a multiparty House would be Pat Robertson-style Christian conservatives, not Aryan Nation skinheads.

Those who claim that PR was responsible for the electoral successes of the National Socialist party in Weimar Germany are mistaken, according to no less an authority than Hermann Goering. Enid Lakeman, a British advocate of PR, writes of Weimar Germany that "if the British electoral system had been in use [the Nazi party] might have been grossly over-represented. . . . Goering said at his trial that under the British system that [1933] election would have given the Nazis every seat in the country, and

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# GOD AND THE INTELLECTUALS

Among the well-educated the myth still circulates that religion is the preserve of the dim-witted, unlettered, and irrational, that the price of salvation is checking your mind at the Pearly Gates. Yet, from Harvard to Berkeley, and among inquisitive people generally, there's an undeniable renewal of interest in the questions traditional religion raises and seeks to answer. This fascination is largely the result of the failure of secular substitutes for religion (such as positivism, rationalism, hedonism, consumerism, technological utopianism, Freudianism, and Marxism) to give abidingly satisfying answers to the truly significant puzzles in life: evil, goodness, suffering, love, death, and the meaning of it all.

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he cannot have been far wrong." Hitler would have loved the Anglo-American electoral system.

For some, of course, a system that gives any influence to "extremists" like conservative Christians and social democrats is bad. Even if this intolerant position could be reconciled with a commitment to democracy in America, would PR be worse than the plurality system in this respect? Under our present system small but intensely motivated ideological minorities have the power to force moderate Republicans and moderate Democrats to placate them in order to get the small margin of voters sometimes necessary for election in winner-take-all races. In a multi-party system such intense minorities might gain direct representation in Congress but would lose their ability to dictate centrist-party platforms. To be sure, on particular measures large, centrist parties might need small-party help, but they would not need to ally themselves with small parties in order to win election in the first place. In the shifting coalitions formed to pass different bills, the larger, moderate parties would have the upper hand.

In addition to ideological extremism, today's two-party American system promotes "extremism of the center." This results from the need for the two national parties to exaggerate their differences in order to appeal to the crucial minority of white middle-class swing voters. These voters—Wallace-ites and Reagan Democrats—do not identify completely with either national party. Since 1968 they have elected primarily Republican Presidents who share their conservative cultural and foreign-policy values, and Democratic congressmen who protect their middle-class transfers (Social Security, Medicaid, student loans). The penchant of these "populists" for ticket-splitting not only exaggerates the indirect power of this group but also encourages Democrats and Republicans alike to pander to their worst instincts. The Democrats try to appeal to the populist swing vote with giveaways; the Republicans play on racial resentment and call for military strength. If populists had their own party in Congress, their leaders would presumably have to be more responsible and measured in their views than are swing voters whose prejudices and appetites are stoked and exploited by both of today's national parties. As long as there is ticket-splitting, extremism of this kind will be built into our present system—and will corrupt it. A case can be made, then, that PR is just as likely to reduce the political power of extremist minorities as to enhance it.

### Transforming American Politics

**O**F COURSE, A LITTLE INSTABILITY MIGHT HELP end the trench warfare in American politics. By multiplying the possibilities for coalitions, a PR-produced multiparty system could introduce movement and change where there is now only partisan maneuvering on the margins of deadlock. To use the parties in my example, a legislative coalition of Re-

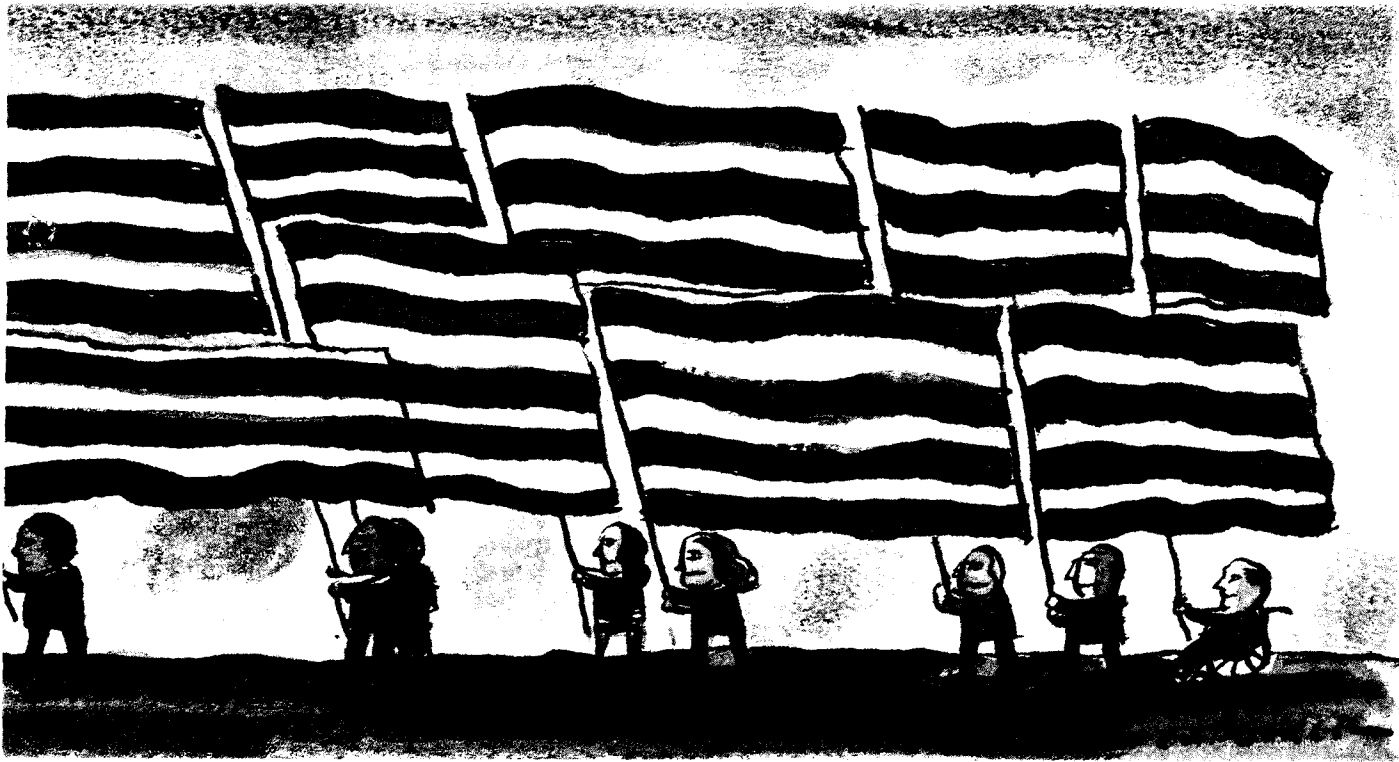


publicans, Libertarians, and Conservatives might be able to cap runaway spending and put through a bill enabling parents to choose the schools that their children will attend. Populists might be able to attract Social Democrats and Conservatives whose lower-middle-class constituents were dependent on federal transfer payments into an alliance on the issue of comprehensive health-care reform. Small-town Christian Conservatives and rural Greens might find themselves allied against environmentally disruptive development projects.

The formation of multiple parties could transform American politics in other ways. Although only members of the House of Representatives would be elected by PR, parties in the House would soon begin to run candidates for the Senate as well, so that the Senate, too, might be divided among several parties—offering a choice, not an echo.

The effects on presidential elections could be even more interesting, because of the constitutional provision that if no presidential candidate wins a majority of the electoral-college vote, the choice will be left to the House of Representatives. "The presence of a third important party capable of obtaining seats in the House of Representatives and a few electoral votes would hardly throw every presidential election into the House of Representatives," Theodore Lowi has written. "Its presence *would*, however, force each of the candidates for the nominations of the two major parties to look to the House of Representatives as the place where the real election *might take place*. This would transform the presidency because Congress would become the president's direct constituency."





The possibility that a splitting of the presidential vote among several candidates would give the House the opportunity to choose might deter Presidents from demagogically “running against Congress,” as have Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and George Bush.

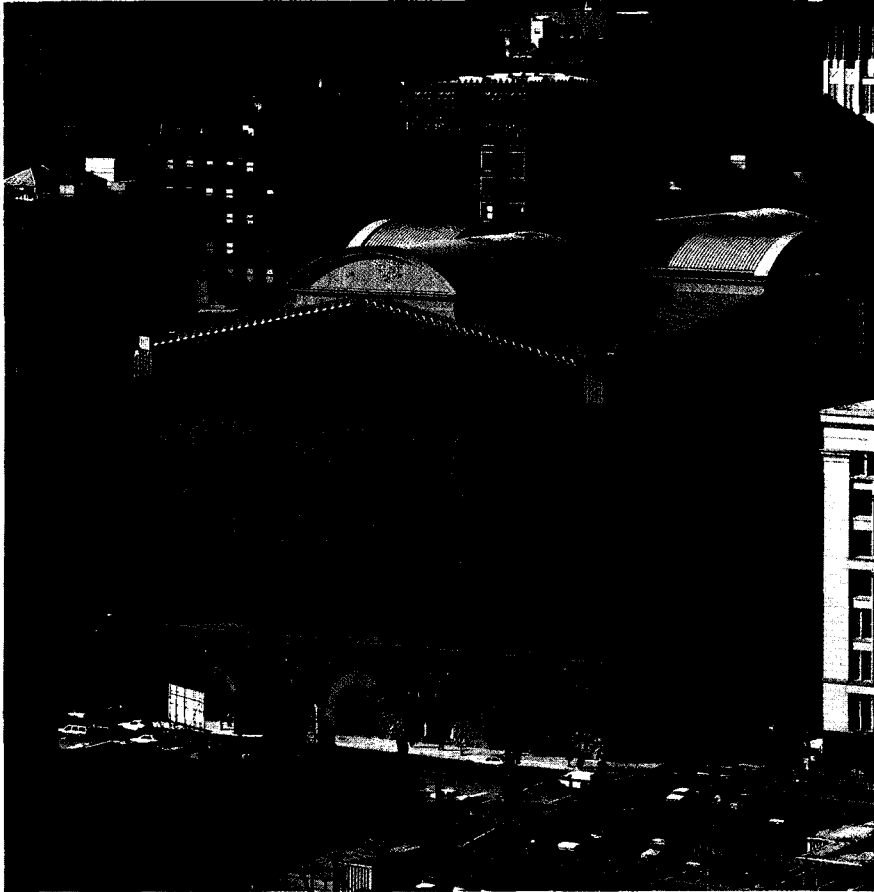
A much more likely scenario than elections thrown into the House is the formation of multiparty alliances to elect presidential candidates. Not only might populists have the dominant party in the House, but also they might be the dominant partner in winning presidential alliances. No longer would populists be tempted to split their votes between Republican Presidents and Democratic Congresses. Divided government could come to an end.

Such a system might create incentives for interbranch cooperation, rather than confrontation. Since Presidents would tend to be elected by the same multiparty coalition that dominated voting in the House, they would be inclined to view major congressmen as allies, not enemies. At the same time, the multiplication of parties might increase presidential influence in Congress, because it would be difficult for centrist majorities in the House to entice Greens, radical Christians, and other small parties into the supermajorities needed to override presidential vetoes. Presidents who found it easier to organize legislative coalitions, in turn, would be less tempted to circumvent Congress and undermine constitutional democracy by bureaucratic policy changes in the name of “inherent executive power.”

There might even be a parallel to the “era of good feelings” that, in hindsight, can be seen to have existed from

1936 to 1968. Contrast the accomplishments of that era—the winning of the Second World War, the Marshall Plan, NATO, GATT, the GI Bill, interstate highways, public education, the Civil Rights Act—with the dissension, deadlock, and deficits of the period from 1968 to the present. Contributing to the nonpartisan achievements of that earlier period might have been the fact that the United States had a *de facto* three-party system. From their rebellion against FDR’s court-packing scheme until their downfall as the result of the civil-rights movement, conservative southern Democrats in Congress functioned in effect as a third party, voting almost as often with the Republicans as with liberal Democrats. Their power had evil roots, to be sure, in black disenfranchisement; recognizing this, one can also recognize that they played a moderating role in American politics, checking the excesses of left-wing New Dealers and isolationist Republicans alike. If something like the post-1968 two-party system had existed from the Depression until the 1960s, with a deep division between left-wing New Dealers and far-right Republicans combined with nearly constant control of the presidency and Congress by opposing parties, then America might have been far less stable and successful both abroad and at home.

The Founding Fathers did not think that the long development of democratic political forms in America and the world had come to an end with their work. Neither should we. America was once the laboratory of democracy. If the alliance of tradition and cynicism against democratic reform of Congress prevails, America may become democracy’s museum instead. □



## A Good Public Building

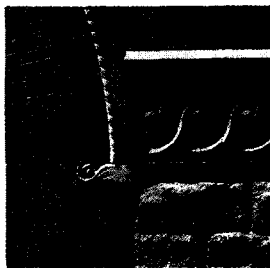
*Chicago's new main library revives old-fashioned architectural virtues*

by Witold Rybczynski

THE SEVENTIES and eighties were the decades of building museums. The international boom was easy to understand: the public's interest in art was fueled by blockbuster exhibitions, the well-publicized extravaganzas of the art market, public-television programs, including Kenneth Clark's *Civilization*, and the museums themselves. It appears that the nineties are going to see another boom in cultural buildings—one that was less predictable. Not new

opera houses or concert halls, not cineplexes or theme parks—new public libraries.

Los Angeles is currently spending more than \$200 million to renew and expand its public library, and San Francisco is building a new 377,000-square-foot main public library. Denver recently held an architectural competition, won by Michael Graves, for a \$65 million central library, and San Antonio is undertaking a similar project. Even Las Vegas,



not known as a book town, has built a new public library, designed by that southwestern firebrand Antoine Predock. In Canada, Vancouver has chosen Moshe Safdie as the architect of its new public library. The French have begun work on an immense new national library, which Parisian wags have already christened the TGB, for *très grande bibliothèque*—a pun on "TGV," the supertrain. The pompous composition of four glass towers has become the focus of a public controversy.

Chicago has also built itself a new public library. Some library! The Harold Washington Library Center, which opened to the public on October 7 of last year, is the largest municipal library in the country and the second-largest public library in the world, after The British Library, in London. The \$144 million, 756,000-square-foot building occupies a full city block on State Street in the South Loop. Perhaps "possesses" would be a better word, because the sturdy ten-story monolith lays claim to its place in this city of famous architecture in such a forceful manner that it already looks as if it had been there forever.

No doubt this impression is exactly what the architect had in mind. "It's a building of memories," Thomas H. Beeby, of Hammond Beeby and Babka, told the *Chicago Sun-Times*. Beeby, who headed the design team, is a native-born Chicagoan, and his fellow citizens will easily recognize in the library bits and pieces of many of their favorite Chicago buildings.

The cyclopean granite base is an obvious reference to the Rookery Building, designed by Burnham & Root and completed in 1886. The brick walls recall the same architects' massive Monadnock Building of 1891, which stands just around the corner. The arched entrances repeat those of Adler & Sullivan's 1889 Auditorium Building. The huge pediments on the roof and the composition of the main façade are derived from the classical front of the Art Institute, a *beaux-arts* landmark on Michigan Avenue designed by the Boston firm of Shepley, Ruten & Coolidge. And some of the metal ornament is based on the same botanical forms that inspired Louis Sullivan's exuberant Carson Pirie Scott Store. Although most of the references are to old buildings, the back of the library—a steel-and-glass

curtain wall—is a nod to Chicago's modernist tradition.

Perhaps this makes the library sound like a collage. But this is not one of those buildings that deconstruct the architectural past in order to reassemble it in some bizarre, skewed format that delights the architecture critics and confounds everyone else. Nor is it, like Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown's recent Sainsbury Wing of the National Gallery in London, a clever but weak-kneed and ironic rendition of a classical building. Beeby and his colleagues take their classicism seriously. Their use of traditional elements avoids the shallowness of much post-modern architecture, because instead of merely aping the classical style or, worse still, parodying it, they are attempting to revive a classical attitude. If this sober and rugged building looks old-fashioned, it is because its designers are concerned with old-fashioned architectural virtues: civility, clarity, utility, and beauty.

THE NEW library has no wind-swept plaza with a forlorn Calder or Henry Moore sculpture, no dried-up reflecting pools, no concrete planters with dying evergreens and paper litter. The walls spring straight up from the sidewalk, just as all downtown buildings in Chicago (or, indeed, any American city) did from the 1870s until the 1950s, when architects adopted Mies van der Rohe's tower-in-a-plaza approach. The Harold Washington Library Center reaffirms the older tradition, and it's a reminder that cities are made up first of all of streets, and that the prime function of urban buildings is to define these streets.

The exterior of the library, like that of all well-designed buildings, conveys several messages. Its heavy walls proclaim solidity and permanence. The monumental scale suggests a civic building of some importance. The different materials—metal and glass on top, brick for the main body, and stone at the base—are not arbitrary choices but represent the need to support heavier and heavier loads. The tripartite organization also reflects what is going on inside: the base houses special facilities (the lobby, a bookstore, a film and video center, the children's library), the brick body contains six floors of book stacks, and the top con-

tains special public rooms (a restaurant, a winter garden) and the administrative offices.

If the interior of this mammoth building feels familiar and unintimidating, that is probably because it resembles a department store, with social sciences on one floor, literature on another. As in a department store, the public is transported from floor to floor by escalators as well as elevators. Each of the library floors consists of book stacks through which the public can freely browse. There are plenty of reading tables and, along one side, a series of intimate alcoves that resemble the carrels often found in academic libraries. The library incorporates a wealth of technical gadgetry, including an electronic directory system that displays floor layouts, book locations, and information on special events; a computerized reference system; on-line information services; and banks of freely accessible computers and printers.

The main lobby is a bland, characterless space that is a letdown after the robust exterior. Its focus is an art installation that incorporates text from Harold Washington's speeches, but the intent of the art, which conveys neither wisdom nor joy, remains obscure. The winter garden, however, a glass-roofed space at the top of the building, is spectacular. Perhaps too spectacular. Unfortunately, what was to have been a public room, filled with trees and benches, remains largely unfurnished; it appears to have been co-opted by the library management for civic galas, and is also being rented out for private social events. Too bad.

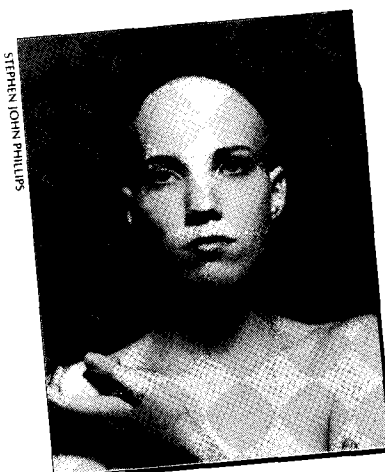
A great deal of credit goes to a municipal administration that insisted on good-quality construction, inside and out, figuring that flimsy materials would only increase maintenance costs later. The Napoleon red granite of the base looks thick because it is thick; the entrance doors are bronze; the interior walls are plaster on metal lath, not wallboard; and the old-fashioned, comfortable courthouse chairs in the reading areas are solid maple. Parenthetically, the solid craftsmanship was realized concurrently with the most modern of construction techniques: "design-build." In design-build a developer, a contractor, and an architect form a team that undertakes to design and build a project within a fixed peri-

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od of time and to swallow any cost overruns. In the case of the Chicago library, the building was built within the budget and was delivered only one month late.

IN HIS recent book, *Architecture: The Natural and the Manmade*, the architectural historian Vincent Scully repeats the old architectural aphorism that "one should decorate construction, never build decoration." Scully is referring to the use of decoration to give character to buildings, contrasting this with striving for individuality by trying to make the shape of each building different. It's not surprising to learn that Scully was on the jury for the 1987 architectural competition that chose the Hammond Beeby and Babka design. The building is really a large box that derives its architectural character precisely from the use of applied decoration.

The library is probably the first large American public building since the 1930s to incorporate figurative ornament. There are cast-stone festoons between the windows, and medallions with puff-cheeked faces, drolly personifying the Windy City. Window spandrels are decorated with sheaves of corn stalks that terminate in a head of Ceres, the goddess of agriculture, and a ribbon with Chicago's motto, "Urbs et Hortis" ("Garden City"). The most dramatic ornaments were designed by the sculptor Raymond Kaskey for the

perimeter of the roof. Huge cast-aluminum barn owls, backed by spreading palm leaves, appear at the corners of the building, and the center of the main façade, on State Street, is marked by a huge horned owl, wings spread, clutching a book.

"Classicism is an architectural language that is highly developed and understood by most people," Thomas Beeby says. But do the sweatshirted and baseball-capped teenagers who use the library know who

Ceres was? Can they read Latin? Probably not. And they won't know that the chain-patterned band of cast stone that surrounds the building's base is called a guilloche, or that the frieze along the pediments represents swords and shields. That will not necessarily stop them from deriving pleasure from the decorative shapes, the puff-cheeked faces, and the wise owls. In any case, the function of architectural decoration is not only symbolic. Ornament provides buildings with scale, or rather with many scales. Modernist buildings

that lack decoration can be handsome structures, like Mies van der Rohe's Seagram Building, say, or Louis Kahn's Salk Institute, and can make their powerful presence felt at a distance. But what happens when one approaches? Nothing. There is no finer grain, no detail, except perhaps a neoprene gasket or a bolt head. Seen close up, the abstract shapes of the bronze mullions and flat concrete surfaces are one-dimensional, dull, uninteresting.



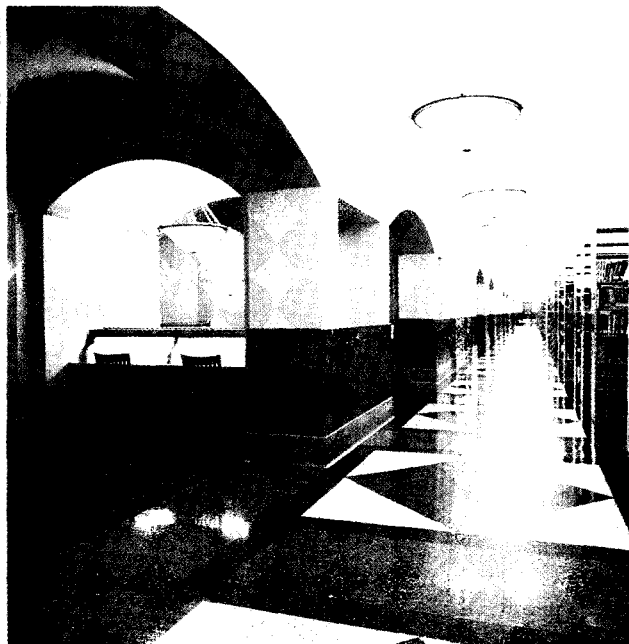
JUDITH BROWLEY

At the top, glass pediments offer a sweeping view of the city

In 1982 Michael Graves built the Portland Building, in Portland, Oregon; it was the first large public building by a postmodern architect. After the Portland Building, critics of postmodernism, of whom there were many, could no longer dismiss it as a fringe movement—it had joined the mainstream. Will the Chicago library, a more accomplished piece of design and a more prominent building, do the same for classicism? That is unlikely. The spread of postmodernism in the 1980s, like deconstructivism today, was driven by architectural magazines and schools of architecture, neither of which appears to be interested in classicism. Although *Progressive Architecture* magazine did single out the design of the Chicago library for a citation in its 1989 awards for excellence, since then no historicist work has been so honored. And students in schools of architecture are not being taught the classical vocabulary but are being encouraged to find a personal language of architectural expression.

Beeby has stubbornly refused to develop an individual style and has preferred to adapt his buildings to their contexts. Several years ago he built a children's camp in Connecticut, for the Paul Newman Foundation, and took his cue from the rugged log-cabin vernacular of the Adirondack camp. A ranch he recently designed outside Santa Fe, New Mexico, is built in adobe. And in London, Beeby is part of

JUDITH BROWLEY



Intimate reading alcoves are set off from open book stacks

an Anglo-American team that is replanning and rebuilding Paternoster Square, a seven-acre area around St. Paul's Cathedral, to conform to its original, early-Georgian roots.

It is unlikely that there will ever be a recognizable Beeby style, just as there was no Thomas Hastings style, to name an accomplished classical architect of the turn of the century. With John Carrère, Hastings built Spanish Revival hotels in St. Augustine, Florida, French stately houses on Long Island and in the Berkshires, and—his masterwork—the *beaux-arts* New York Public Library, a building as ambitious, grand, and technologically advanced in its day as the Harold Washington Library Center is in ours.

NEW YORK built its public library almost a hundred years ago, and to some people the idea of building a large downtown library might seem an anachronism. They would argue that the grand public library, like the majestic railroad terminus or the opulent city hall, is a relic of the nineteenth century; surely the money would be better spent on strengthening the branch libraries, on

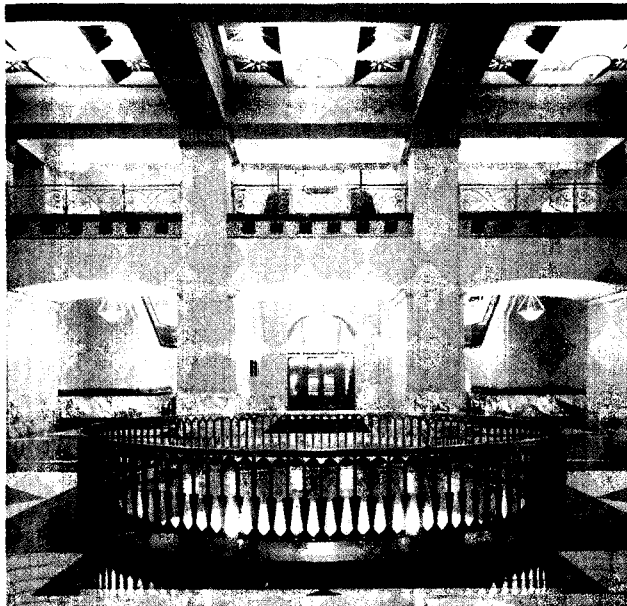
which could be anywhere—in the office, at school, at home, or even in one's car—replace the grand public library?

Decentralization may yet come, but although we need reading programs, and neighborhood libraries, and books, we also need civic monuments. A civic monument enshrines values that we hold dear, and it publicly proclaims these values to us and to our children. It is surely no coincidence that the boom in building public libraries coincides with a serious public effort to combat illiteracy and to promote reading. "I do think that the library stands as a symbol that the life of the mind is still vital," says John B. Duff, the commissioner of the Chicago Public Library. Just so.

I spent several hours in the Harold Washington Library Center. The atmosphere was different from that in other public buildings. Unlike a museum, it had no price of admission, and the security guards were unobtrusive; the stacks were open, and the books were there to be picked up and leafed through. There was also a more mixed crowd than one finds in a museum or a concert hall: groups of teenagers, elderly

men and women, college students, street people. In a period when even art museums are beginning to resemble shopping malls, this library stands apart. It didn't make me feel like a consumer, or a spectator, or an onlooker—it made me feel like a citizen.

Most striking of all, the library makes not the slightest effort to entertain the people who use it. Too many of our public places (shopping malls, airports) are either selling us something or attempting to keep us amused. The Chicago library takes itself, and its users, seriously, and through an architecture that is calm and measured, it resolutely communicates this sense of purpose: that books and reading and knowledge are important. □



The main lobby. Escalators lead to the book collections above

outreach programs, on promoting literacy, and on books. This position is bolstered by the fact that technology has in great part done away with the need for central libraries. The banking machine has replaced the stately bank, so why shouldn't a computer terminal,



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## Farmed Fish

*Often it's the only choice at restaurants and markets—but can it taste more than white?*

by Corby Kummer

FOOD LOVERS have greeted the advent of farmed fish with alarm. Fish with real flavor, they fear, will soon be the province of sport fishermen and epicures willing to pay high prices for a wild food that may become as rare as game. Genetic engineering and mass production, they say, can lead only to anonymous fish, and soon fish will end up like much commercially raised chicken—as white protein with no discernible flavor.

To test these claims, I recently arranged a tasting of farmed against wild fish at Legal Sea Foods. In the process of learning about the differences, I learned much about how to buy fish in its best condition. Legal, as the group of restaurants is known, is Boston's most popular purveyor of fish. Visitors and Bostonians alike line up at its eight locations (you can't make res-

ervations) for what will reliably be a wide variety of perfectly fresh fish. Roger Berkowitz, the head of the family-owned restaurants, was hard pressed to find wild fish and shellfish to test against the commonly farmed varieties—already a sign of the takeover of farmed fish.

You won't ever find a wild-caught trout, for instance, at a fish market—it's illegal to sell one. Atlantic salmon has been so overfished, and so much of its habitat was destroyed by dams and pollution, that now it is virtually unavailable commercially, and the only wild salmon regularly sold comes from the Pacific Northwest. If the menu or the sign in the fish case doesn't specify a northwestern variety, such as sockeye, king, or coho or silver (these two are the same), the salmon you order or buy will be farm-raised Atlantic sal-

mon, probably from Norway, Canada, or Scotland. Any catfish or crayfish is likely to be farmed too, although there are still significant catches of wild crayfish on the West Coast and in Louisiana, where it is called crawfish, as in crawfish étouffée. Farmed fish currently accounts for only about 10 percent of the fish consumed in this country, but that figure is misleading. The most intensively farmed fish are the kinds people want to buy and order, rather than varieties that are put into fish sticks or ground and extruded to make surimi, commonly sold as mock crab or shrimp.

Like many restaurants across the country, Legal uses farmed fish regularly, including salmon, trout, catfish, and scallops, because of its guaranteed consistency—that paramount concern of the restaurateur. This seeming para-



dox, a fish house in an active center of commercial fishing relying on farmed fish, is not unique to America. Ninety percent of the salmon eaten in Western Europe is farmed. On a recent trip to Apulia, a region of Italy on the Adriatic coast, I was served farmed salmon and bass in Trani, a pretty port town in an area that has traditionally relied on commercial fishing.

The suppliers to Legal Sea Foods did their best to obtain as many kinds of wild-caught fish as they could, because they knew that the guest of honor at the tasting would be Julia Child. (Child turns eighty on August 15, and the occasion will be much celebrated. She is likely to take the fêtes in stride and go on maintaining her punishing schedule, ever supplied with robust good humor and frank opinions.) A few years ago Child researched fish for her masterly, useful *The Way to Cook*; she was eager to try farmed versus wild fish, something she'd never had the chance to do.

**A**QUACULTURE is the world's fastest-growing food-producing industry, according to the Institute of Food Technologists. Its defenders say that it is an economical way of making easily available a highly nutritious food, without incurring the great environmental and occupational hazards of commercial fishing—or the health hazards of chemical residues and viruses, which eating wild fish (chiefly fish caught near the shore, versus in the open sea) can present in the absence of any comprehensive and mandatory U.S. inspection program. They say, too, that farms choose varieties for their taste, and that they kill and store fish far more carefully than most commercial fisheries, resulting in better-tasting fish.

Detractors say that aquaculture poses its own threats to the environment, including, in ocean pens, pollution from fish feces and from the insecticides and herbicides that are sometimes used; also, uneaten fish food collects on the ocean floor and robs water of oxygen. Antibiotics are frequently given to farmed fish, as they are to farmed livestock and poultry, to prevent disease outbreaks that result when so many animals live so closely packed; although the doses are very small, they are so far unregulated. Any disease that attacks a pen spreads

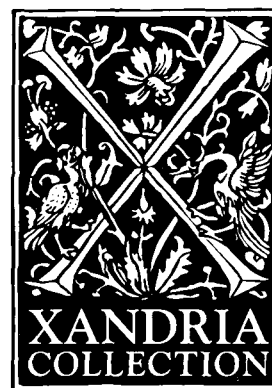
rapidly, and can infect wild stocks nearby. Domesticated fish can escape from pens and crossbreed with wild stocks, weakening them.

These issues are more pertinent to marine than to freshwater fish farms, where the pens are usually in specially dug ponds. And, with the exception of a case of toxic algal bloom traced to farmed shellfish, health and environmental problems have as yet been few in the United States (although a number have occurred in Norway and Ireland). The most pressing problem that fish farms have presented here so far, aside from spoiling the views on expensive shorefront property, is putting commercial fishermen, mostly in Alaska, out of business. The drops in price that sudden gluts can cause have even put some fish farms out of business.

Cooks say that penned fish are flaccid for lack of exercise, and often flavorless because they eat packaged feed. Like poultry, fish tastes of what it eats, which explains the variability that in wild fish—especially a scavenger like wild catfish—is often annoying to restaurant chefs but is welcome to people who like strong-flavored fish. Most people, of course, *don't* like strong-flavored fish, which accounts for the phenomenal popularity of some kinds of farmed fish—especially channel catfish, once a strong-flavored fish that was much loved in Arkansas and the Mississippi Delta but almost unknown elsewhere. ("Ocean catfish" is a very different species, usually called wolf-fish.) Now bred to a perfect blandness, it has become the fifth most popular fish in America. The Catfish Institute, which markets farmed catfish, ominously describes its product as "chickens that don't cluck." Richard Schweid, in *Catfish and the Delta*, an absorbing investigation of the conditions in Mississippi catfish plants and a portrait of life on the Delta, quotes a scornful catfish-lover:

"You touch a farm-raised fish and your hands don't even smell. A fish should stink. River fish stink. They stink like fish 'cause they're down there eating other fish."

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THE FISH-TASTING at Legal was conducted blind: farmed and wild versions of each kind of fish were presented side by side, without identification, by Jean-Jacques Paimblanc, the French-born chef who is the head of research and development for Legal. Most of the wild fish had a stronger flavor, and in nearly every case I preferred it—not a result I expected, since if anything I went in thinking that farmed fish has not been given a fair chance by gourmets. I was often at odds with Child and Berkowitz, however, who in several instances were fooled by which was which and frequently liked the farmed better.

None of our opinions can be called definitive, because the flavor of wild-caught fish depends on when in its development cycle the fish was caught and on what it ate—and also on whether it was handled and shipped properly, which too much fish isn't. And to be fair, a test should compare a farmed variety with a wild one that is nearly identical in species, which is often impossible. Nonetheless, in most cases we were able to make valid comparisons, and I report here on the four most telling and widely applicable of the six we made. My fellow tasters' preferences (and assumptions about what makes fish desirable) taught me much about why farmed fish will only increase in popularity.

An instructive example of the pros and cons of farmed fish is mussels, a big aquaculture success. Maine and Prince Edward Island are producing excellent farmed mussels, which often differ from wild mussels only in being meatier and cleaner. At the country's largest seafood show, in Boston, I had recently tasted farmed P.E.I. mussels as good as any mussels I'd ever had. The farmed ones at the tasting, also from P.E.I., were surprisingly soft and "vanilla," as Berkowitz called them, showing that farmed fish, too, can vary in flavor depending on when it's taken.

Farmed mussels have thinner, darker shells than wild, and are usually free of the annoying steel-wool-like black "beard" you have to pull off wild mussels. The cooks at Legal hadn't bothered to remove the beards, giving the wild away immediately, and the wild mussels were gritty; the texture was chewy, the flavor stronger than that of the farmed. The real surprise was the steaming broth. It was sandy, yes, but

briny and dark beside the broth from the farmed mussels, which was almost as clear as water and with as little flavor.

Even if wild mussels can have better flavor, I would buy farmed, because they provide so much more meat and are so easy to clean—you just rinse them, and you don't have to "degorge" them by soaking them in water to purge grit. Mussels cook in a few minutes, either in a pot with some wine and onion and tomato, if you like, or in the microwave oven.

Shrimp, America's most popular shellfish, is badly in need of flavor help for its farmed versions. Already a quarter of the shrimp sold worldwide is farmed, and shrimp is the fastest-growing aquaculture. Sulfites and phosphates are regularly added to nearly all shrimp as whiteners and barriers to spoilage, and to help the shrimp retain moisture; phosphates can impart a soapy flavor. Shrimp also often tastes of ammonia—"like Mr. Clean," Child said dismissively—a sign that it has gone bad. The flavor of farmed shrimp isn't keeping pace with the growth of the industry. At the seafood show I tasted many examples of farmed shrimp from Asia, the principal location of shrimp farms, and could hardly believe how mealy and boring they were.

Legal's farmed shrimp, from Ecuador, were better, but they didn't sell me. Unfortunately, the wild shrimp we tried, from the Gulf Coast, weren't good either. They had that ammonia aftertaste. I decided to give up on shrimp cocktail and "scampi" dishes (true scampi is a relative of the lobster, and is virtually unobtainable even in Italy) and to stick from now on to the kind of small wild shrimp I had tasted at the seafood show, which had been caught in colder waters (cold water usually results in better flavor). Unimpressive as the tiny samples looked, they tasted like shrimp and offered some spring to the bite.

THE SALMON-FARMING industry is the most competitive of any aquaculture, so it's logical that salmon was the best of the farmed fish we tasted. Paimblanc brought out two kinds of farmed Atlantic salmon, one the kind Legal buys, from Canada, and the other Norwegian, handpicked by an importer who wanted to impress Legal and Child. Both farmed salmons

had a deep color and rich texture, and more flavor than is typical: I've often been dismayed by fatty, soft, bland Norwegian salmon. Beside them was a much paler piece of Alaskan salmon, most likely chum, although it had been labeled sockeye.

Berkowitz was fooled. He thought that the Norwegian was wild Pacific king salmon. Child criticized the wild salmon for being dry and short on flavor. Probably it had not been caught at the right time—just before spawning, when salmon is fattest. Nonetheless, I preferred it, because although less lush it had the gaminess I associate with the best salmon, and I would always risk dryness for the flavor of wild salmon.

Almost all legally caught wild Pacific salmon this year will come from waters off Alaska. This year catches off California, Oregon, and Washington have been greatly restricted, and press reports of the restriction mistakenly imply that wild salmon will be in short supply.

Too, we were confounding species, something hard to avoid since farmed Pacific salmon is much less common than Atlantic. Atlantic salmon is actually more closely related to trout than to Pacific salmon. Arctic char, from Iceland, a fish just now being intensively farmed, has excited cooks. It tastes like a cross between salmon and trout and is a pale salmon color. Jasper White, of Jasper's, in Boston, who is as careful and discerning a cook of seafood as any in the country, plans to make arctic char an exception to his general rule of serving only wild-caught fish.

The last comparison showed clearly what farming will never be able to do. We tasted striped bass, the fishing of which during much of the eighties was banned up and down the Atlantic coast because of dangerously low stocks; only recently have restrictions been occasionally relaxed. A bass-farming industry grew to meet the demand. Farmed striped bass are hybrids, bred with freshwater white bass, and they only echo wild striped bass, which to my mind is the king of Atlantic fish. Paimblanc brought out an undernourished-looking, insipid creature from a farm in western Massachusetts, which tasted like some forgettable kind of sole. Beside it was a beautiful, thick piece of striped bass from Virginia, soft but not mushy, powerfully oily, fishy in the best way. It set us all to thinking

how we'd cook it. "I'd love it broiled with lots of butter, maybe a caper or two on the side," Child said. Paimblanc remembered cooking bass at Le Pavillon, the legendary New York City restaurant: "We'd roast the whole fish with shallots and white wine, and mix the juices with butter."

Child did not dismiss the farmed bass, however, and dreamed up buttery ways to dress it, too: butter and cream make Child unapologetically happy. Berkowitz told us that the oils in the wild bass, resulting perhaps from her-  
ring or other oily fish the bass had eaten, would scare some people off: "It's too much flavor," he said. Here was further evidence that people will gladly forgo the taste of wild fish in favor of something that meekly suits their favorite fish dish. This is why Berkowitz was confident that he could sell the farmed bass at his restaurants—maybe even more of it than the wild—and why farmed catfish has vaulted to popularity.

**T**HE FINE points of whether farmed or wild-caught fish tastes better won't make much difference when you're at the fish counter, because you rarely have a choice between them. In fact, you'll be lucky to find out which kind the fish is. Learning where the fish is from and whether it has been frozen is a matter of chance, since if you ask a sales clerk, you're likely to receive the wrong answer. To get good fish, you're forced to rely on the people who do the ordering and storing.

A basic rule in buying fish is that neither the area where fish is sold nor any of the fish should have any odor at all. A fishy smell means that high numbers of bacteria are at work. The very freshest fish does have a strong, pleasant, seaweedlike odor, but you can usually smell that only on a fishing boat. "Look for an antiseptic environment," says Jon Rowley, an authority on fish and the owner of Fish Works, in Seattle, which advises fishermen and fish buyers. "The glass on the fish cases should be spotless, the stainless steel gleaming, and the workers should wear clean clothes."

A whole fish, something that is becoming harder to find (Child, lamenting diners' reluctance to cope with bones, said, "People are getting to be such damned sissies"), gives you more infor-



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mation to help you judge freshness. The clarity of the eye of a fish, something most people remember as crucial, isn't as important or as reliable as odor. Skin should be bright and shiny and adhere tightly to the flesh. The more scales that remain on a scaly fish, like salmon, the better it was handled.

Most fish, though, is sold in fillets, and the best test is again smell. Ask if you can pierce plastic wrap to take a whiff; you may be unpopular with the service person, but rewrapping the fish actually requires just a few seconds. Fillets should be free of any bits of skin and bone, and should not curl at the edges or show signs of yellowing. The flakes should still be tightly connected rather than "gaping"—often a sign of age, although certain fish, such as bluefish and cod, have big flakes that are more loosely attached than the flakes of other kinds, such as sole and perch.

Raw and cooked fish in a display case should never be kept on the same ice, since any contamination on the raw can easily spread to the cooked. The best way for a merchant to store whole fish is covered with ice, which keeps it at an ideal temperature and, with proper drainage, continually washes off bacteria. A pool of liquid under fish indicates that the cell structure is breaking down, and the stagnant liquid can be high in bacteria.

Put unfrozen fish you buy in the coldest part of the refrigerator, preferably on ice, and cook it as soon as possible after getting it home. If you buy frozen fish, defrost it in the refrigerator, not at room temperature or under warm water. My favorite way to cook fish is in the microwave oven, but under a broiler, and of course on a grill, are excellent ways too. For general cooking information I often turn to Shirley King's *Fish: The Basics*. Unfortunately there is no single invaluable reference, but an elegant and helpful book is Alan Davidson's *Seafood*, with beautiful illustrations by Charlotte Knox. The vital first step is finding a source of consistently fresh fish.

"Fresh" does not mean fish that has never been frozen; it is better used for the opposite of "stale." To anyone knowledgeable about fish, "frozen" is not a dirty word. The fact is that 90 percent of fish sold in this country has at some point been frozen. And fish that is carefully frozen at sea as soon as it is caught and cleaned, and defrosted

slowly in a refrigerator, is likely to taste fresher than "fresh" fish that is kept chilled for days before it reaches port. Fish chilled as it travels can partly freeze during the several legs of its journey to market or restaurant, causing damage to the flesh, and when it defrosts, it will lose much liquid. Also, the variety of temperatures at which unfrozen fish is often kept during the long time from catch to sale increases the likelihood that it could prove a health hazard from acquired bacteria.

Properly handled just-caught fish is refrigerated or, preferably, frozen before it enters rigor mortis. Though it may seem indecorous to discuss rigor mortis regarding something you're going to eat, the subject is of central concern to anyone interested in fish. If fish is left at ambient temperature for even a few hours—the time it takes to enter rigor mortis—the texture will irretrievably suffer. If it is frozen immediately, the thawed fish can be superior. Bruce Gore, a Seattle-based fisherman whose frozen Pacific salmon, mostly king and coho, costs more than almost any kind of unfrozen, has had the pleasure of seeing his pristine fish beat samples of top-quality unfrozen salmon of the same species in blind taste tests.

Your fishmonger, like most restaurateurs, might well have already decided to take the easy route with commonly farmed varieties of fish. Farmed fish does offer commendable consistency and occasionally, as in the cases of salmon and mussels, a taste strongly reminiscent of the real thing. But it is a standardization of something that is elusive and at its best inimitable. As fears about safety and overfishing rise, we'll probably be obliged to rely on farmed fish in very popular varieties. To cultivate a taste for wild-caught fish, you're best off trying odd kinds. So-called trash fish like cusk, skate, wolf-fish, and porgies, which are available year-round, can be some of the most enjoyable fish you'll ever cook. Keep an eye out for fish that appears only at certain times of the year, like mackerel, soft-shell crabs, shad, and cotuit oysters. They allow you to savor something with a short, uncertain season and unique flavor. That incomparable flavor is the reward for waiting until any food is at its peak rather than trying to have it any time. Take a chance when company isn't coming. □

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translated by M. A. Screech.

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MONTAIGNE, a French lawyer and landowner, retired to his family property in the Dordogne when he was thirty-eight, in 1571, about the time that Shakespeare started grade school. With little to do, he got bored and then depressed, and to keep himself busy he began writing what he called *Essais*, or "Attempts." He addressed himself to a wide variety of subjects—sadness, idleness, liars, fear, smell, prayer, cannibals, and thumbs, among many others—but his ultimate and revolutionary subject was himself. The essay form, in which example and commentary, the objective and the subjective, twist around each other in generative embrace, did not exist; Montaigne proceeded to invent it.

Keith Jarrett, the jazz pianist, paying tribute at a recent concert to Miles Davis, said

that even on a bad night Davis had tried with everything he had, as a jazz artist must, to body forth his individuality. The night I heard him, Jarrett himself was not, perhaps, at his best, but he was certainly working hard to make himself known. "It's not the music I care about," he said. "It's the process."

For Montaigne, too, it was the process that counted, and in that sense I nominate him the father of jazz, inventor of the verbal riff, the man who elevated organic form over inherited structures and first made art by letting one thing lead to another. He, too, wanted to make his individuality known. Although he was a modest man, who didn't think himself extraordinary in any way, he believed that everyone's mind was unique, and he wanted to leave a record of his own. "I have dedicated this book to the private benefit of my friends and kinsmen," he wrote when he published the first two volumes of his essays, in 1580, "so that, having lost me (as they must do soon) they can find here again some traits of my character and of my humours."

Montaigne worked in a round library at the top of a tower. The wars of religion raged around him, but Montaigne, unlike many others, did not fortify his house, believing—with characteristic

paradox, and rightly in the case—that no one would bother to attack that which was not defended. He himself was Catholic and conservative in temperament, feeling that unless one was absolutely sure the new way was better, there was no reason to change from the old and familiar. And how could he ever be sure? "*Que sçay-je?*" ("What do I know?") was the motto struck on a medal he commissioned to commemorate his retirement, and emblazoned on his library ceiling was Pliny's reminder that nothing is certain except that nothing is certain.

Humility—a sense of the largeness of the universe and the insignificance of the self—was central to Montaigne's gaiety, and hence his continuing power to charm. "When I play with my cat, how do I know that she is not passing time with me rather than I with her?" In his lifetime a whole new world was being discovered, one the wisest men had been certain did not exist. Textbook wisdom has it that this discovery produced distressing responses in "Renaissance Man"—paralyzing uncertainty, or compensatory fanaticism, or just sheer gloom. Not in Montaigne. To him, the New World, with its strange inhabitants, was exhilarating, more grist for the mill of his imagination. In his famous essay "On the Cannibals,"

which inspired parts of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, he paid tribute to the nobility of



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## Peace in the Middle East

### Can it be achieved in this round of negotiations?

After over forty years and five bloody wars, the Arabs have finally consented to meet Israel at the negotiating table and to discuss peace. This is being done mostly at the prodding of the United States, whom none of the protagonists wish to antagonize unduly.

### What are the facts?

**The Root of the Middle East Conflict.** Many observers of the Middle East scene seem to believe that the root of the Middle East conflict lies in the dispute between the "Palestinians" and the Israeli Jews; that peace could come to the area if that conflict could be resolved and if Israel yielded the administered territories to the Arabs. They overlook that the conflict between Palestinian Arabs and Jews long predates Israel's control over the administered territories, and that Israel would be defenseless if it were to yield control of these territories at this time.

**The Menace of Islamic Fundamentalism.** The clamor for yielding these territories to the Arabs is the first step in the immutable Arab attempt to liquidate Israel altogether. Because, certainly, Israel, with its fewer than 5 million inhabitants, compared to almost 300 million Arabs, cannot possibly be a threat to peace or a menace to the Arabs. The main reason that real peace is so difficult to attain is the political and cultural context of the Middle East, which is dominated by the menace of Islamic fundamentalism. By the tenets of this fundamentalism, Israel's size is not of importance; it is *the very existence* of Israel

which is an intolerable offense, an unacceptable insult to Islam. The fundamentalist Moslems— Hamas, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, and all the others—do not aim at peace with Israel or the recovery of some territory. Their publicly declared aim is the destruction of the Jewish state. In December of 1991, the Islamic Jihad stated: "...we will be satisfied with nothing but the destruction of Israel."

### Real Peace Must be Global.

Another reason that real peace will be difficult to attain in the present climate is that any agreement that could be attained in this round of negotiations would be a non-global one. The

"Real peace...can only happen through complete change of mentality, policies and historical ambition in the Arab-Iranian block."

most fervent enemies of Israel—Iran, Iraq, Lybia and the Palestinian rejectionists—not only do not participate in the negotiations, but vehemently oppose them. Those Arab statesmen who have tried to come to terms with the Jewish state have invariably found a terrible end. King Abdullah of Transjordan was assassinated by the rejectionists, so was President Anwar Sadat of Egypt, and so was Bashir Gemayel of Lebanon, all of whom envisioned peaceful co-existence with Israel. Every Arab leader knows that any overt declaration of wishing to make real peace and to co-exist and to co-operate with Israel is a suicidal death sentence.

In view of these realities, is real peace possible? We all want peace, of course, especially the Israelis, who, five wars having been imposed on them, have been almost constantly embattled since the foundation of their state. But because of Arab-Islamic fundamentalism that cannot tolerate a Jewish presence on *any part* of "Arab territory" and because any peace arrived at would be non-global, such real peace would seem difficult to attain at this time. Real peace can only come about through a complete change of mentality, policies and historical ambition in the Arab-Iranian block, abandonment of fanatic fundamentalism, and change in governance from despotism to genuine democracy. And that may well take a very long time. In the meantime, Israel must keep up its guard and cannot afford—not even to please its friends, including the United States—to yield strategic territory, without which it would be vulnerable.

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the Indians while he acknowledged their cruelty. But if they practiced human sacrifice and cannibalism, was it a step forward when their European conquerors converted them to the practice of burying a man to his waist, shooting him half-dead with arrows, and then hanging him?

He was an anthropologist before anthropology: the more he learned of the world, the more he saw differences of custom.

Here they live on human flesh; there, it is a pious duty to kill one's father at a particular age; elsewhere the fathers decide, when the children are still in the womb, which will be kept and brought up and which will be killed and abandoned; elsewhere aged husbands lend their wives to younger men to enjoy; elsewhere again there is no sin in having wives in common—indeed in one country the women, as a mark of honour, hem their skirts with a fringe of tassels to show how many men they have lain with.

In Montaigne, no panic was engendered by relativism; to the partisan certainties of his time he opposed a tolerance based on skepticism. "It is to put a very high value on your surmises to roast a man alive for them." He was pretty sure that in a hundred years people would hardly remember that there had been civil wars in France, to say nothing of being able to articulate what they'd been about. Few people are able to live happily with such a sense of their own unimportance, but Montaigne threw on it. Refusing all kinds of easy certainty, easy solace, he remained good-natured, and the cheerful face he gave to wisdom is, I think, what's most lovable in him, so different from the grave despondency we have been taught to associate with the philosophic mind.

Montaigne makes learning look good. The pleasure and the point of the essays is less in any insight than in the abundance and lucidity of insight, less in any story than in the movement of the mind between one story and another, from antiquity to the present, from this world to the antipodes. The essays offer an image of a mind darting comfortably out from the center of its own experience, experience both lived and acquired through books, with equal access to near and far, distant and present, in its search for self-knowledge and



equilibrium. What he had read helped Montaigne palpably in his effort to live better and die well. "He who had never actually seen a river, the first time he did so took it for the ocean, since we think that the biggest things that we know represent the limits of what Nature can produce in that species." Against this kind of provinciality he deployed the wisdom of the ancients and any other mediated experience he could get his hands on. The imagination needed stretching, literature was the exercise equipment, and torrential example became moral response.

The tyrant Dionysius offered Plato a long, perfumed, damask robe, fashionable in Persia. Plato refused it saying that, since he was born a man, he would not willingly wear women's clothing. Aristippus, however, accepted it, replying that no apparel could corrupt a chaste heart; and when his friends taunted him with cowardice for taking so little offence when Dionysius spat in his face, he replied: "Merely to catch a gudgeon fishermen suffer the waves to bespatter them from head to foot." Diogenes was washing some cabbage leaves when he saw Aristippus go by: "If you knew how to live on cabbage," Diogenes said, "you would not be courting a tyrant." Aristippus retorted: "You would not be here washing cabbages, if you knew how to live among men."

That is how Reason can make different actions seem right. Reason is a two-handed pot: you can grab it from the right or the left. . . . When they lectured Solon for shedding vain and useless tears at the death of his son, he replied, "It is precisely because they are vain and useless that I am right to shed them." Socrates' wife exclaimed, increasing her grief: "Those wretched judges have condemned him to death unjustly!" But Socrates replied, "Would you really prefer that I were justly condemned?"

**M**ONTAIGNE was educated according to a notion of his father's, so that Latin was his mother tongue rather than French, and he knew Greek, though he was never comfortable in it. He cited stories and passages from Cicero, Seneca, Terence, Plutarch, Lucretius, Xenophon, Herodotus, Livy, and Martial, to name just a few sources. The essays began as notes on his reading, and the early ones are little more than tissues of quotation,

with stiff and timid commentary. As he went on writing new essays, and revising the early ones, he became freer and increasingly autobiographical, adding stories and examples from his own experience, speaking to the reader more directly, using "I." He prided himself on never erasing, but he did change and add to the text in successive editions. Like a jazz performer, every time he tooted his horn, he tooted it just a little bit differently. Serious modern editions of Montaigne's essays, like this new one from Penguin of M. A. Screech's translation, identify the successive layers of text with successive letters, so that one can follow Montaigne's changes over time. (I've included the letters in this quotation only.)

[A] It is difficulty which makes us prize things.

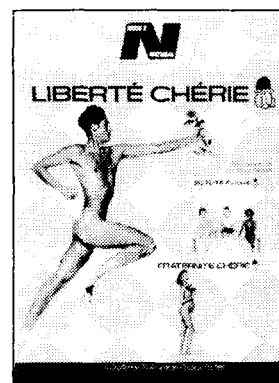
[B] The people of the Marches of Ancona more readily go to Saint James of Compostela to make their vows: those of Galicia, to our Lady of Loreto. At Liège they sing the praises of the baths at Lucca: in Tuscany, of those of Spa-by-Liège. You hardly ever see a Roman in the fencing school of Rome: it is full of Frenchmen! Great Cato tired of his wife—just like the rest of us—while she was his: when she belonged to another he yearned for her. [C] I had an old stallion which I put out to stud: there was no holding it back when it scented the mares. The ease of it all soon sated it where its own mares were concerned; but with other mares, as soon as one passes by its paddock it returns to its incessant neighings and its frenzied passion just as before.

[A] Our appetite scorns and passes over what it holds in its hand, so as to run after what it does not have.

The earliest text, with elegant abstraction, sets the theme; the later texts play variations, offering specific—and increasingly personal—examples.

This is how Montaigne described his method:

I take the first subject Fortune offers: all are equally good for me. I never plan to expound them in full. . . . Everything has a hundred parts and a hundred faces: I take one of them and sometimes just touch it. . . . I jab into it, not as wide but as deep as I can; and I often prefer to catch it from some unusual angle. . . . I can surrender to doubt and uncertainty and to my master-form, which is ignorance. Anything we do reveals us.



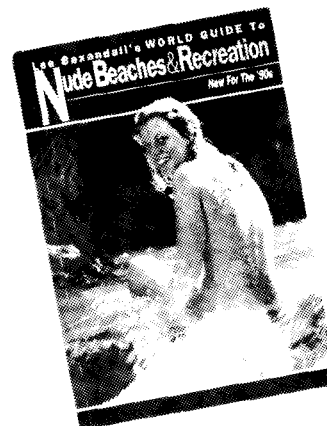
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**STRAIGHT TALK  
ABOUT ADOPTION**  
*by Katharine Davis Fishman*

Each year about sixty thousand children are adopted in the United States by unrelated people. Popular images to the contrary, only about half of these adoptions involve infants, and more than a quarter involve children with "special needs"—that is, children who are older, or who have mental, physical, or emotional handicaps, or who should not be separated from siblings. "In a significant and growing number of cases," the author writes, adoption "brings turmoil and grief." An honest approach to the issues, she believes, can lead to substantial improvements in child-welfare, mental-health, and education policy.



**MAKE ME WORK**  
*by Ralph Lombreglia*

"A robin's-egg-blue barber's cape is something like a force field from science fiction. Someone in charge has to lift it from your body before you can move. Anthony sat without arms or the power to leave his chair, his head laid bare like a monkey offering its brains for supper." A short story.

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The same soul of Caesar's which displayed herself in ordering and arranging the battle of Pharsalia is also displayed when arranging his idle and amorous affrays.

Although he seems formidably learned to us, Montaigne did not think himself a bookish person. He preferred action to words. His best ideas came to him when he was on horseback. He said he always chose easy books over hard ones and liked authors who started with their conclusions. In the course of writing and rewriting his essays he took time off to serve as mayor of Bordeaux and also to travel, both for enlargement and to seek cures for his deteriorating health. He wrote for his own amusement. "If anyone says to me that to use the Muses as mere playthings and pastimes is to debase them, then he does not know as I do the value of pleasure, plaything, or pastime. I could almost say that any other end is laughable."

I read Montaigne for his rhythm as much as for anything he tells me—the staccato sentences, the cascading examples, the hard little nuggets of epigrammatic insight. "Wherever peccadillos are treated as crimes, crimes are treated as peccadillos." "Faced with danger I do not reflect on how to escape but on how little it matters that I do so." "I only quote others the better to quote myself." "No wind is right for a seaman who has no predetermined harbour." I read him for the way he shifts and slips from subject to subject. "Where I seek myself I cannot find myself: I discover myself more by accident than by inquiring into my judgment." I do not think Montaigne would mind my reading him more for style than for substance, because he did the same with other writers. "Every day I spend time reading my authors, not caring about their learning, looking not for their subject-matter but how they handle it; just as I go in pursuit of discussions with a celebrated mind not to be taught by it but to get to know it."

In a characteristically indirect essay called "On Coaches" he tells us about Roman coaches drawn by tigers and then offers a long, brilliant portrait of the Spaniards' perfidy toward the Indians of Mexico and Peru. The connection between the two is only hinted at toward the end of the essay, when Montaigne reconstructs an image that struck him in his reading—an image of the Inca King borne not in a tiger-drawn

coach like the decadent Romans but in a chair on the shoulders of his followers. Attacked by the Spaniards, his chair-bearers die in waves, the places of the slaughtered taken by new volunteers until the King himself falls into Spanish hands. The essay ends with almost no ending at all—just that image, a dying fall in more ways than one.

There are other ways to write essays: the tripartite form in which thesis is followed by antithesis and then booming synthesis, for example. People still reach conclusions, or strive for transcendence, or, having explored both sides of a question, leave it predictably unanswered. Not all essays are conceived of as explorations or "trials" of the self, and, although it must be said that this model has also licensed an incredible number of windbags, Montaignesque essays that are based on the illusion that the author is talking to the reader about whatever comes into his or her mind tend to be, at the least, more lively, less stagey, than others—revelations, celebrations, or pronouncements—that cultivate an image of the author as provider of enlightenment.

Montaigne's essays got better and better the later they were written. Anyone interested in sampling them should begin at the end, with the essays of Book III, which was published eight years after the first two. Montaigne died in September of 1592, aged fifty-nine but by his own accounts feeling very old. He had suffered from kidney stones for years and was hardly ever out of discomfort. He revised the essays up until he died, and one of his great continuing themes was how to meet death. On this most serious of all subjects Montaigne was ultimately lighthearted.

I want Death to find me planting my cabbages, neither worrying about it nor the unfinished gardening. I once saw a man die who, right to the last, kept lamenting that destiny had cut the thread of the history he was writing when he had only got up to our fifteenth or sixteenth king!

Let's hope that this habit of mind—a sense of the ridiculous as a form of solace—is catching. It may be Montaigne's most precious gift. That and his jazz spirit, his championing of change, growth, and the provisional nature of any statement. By insisting on making himself known to us in all his individuality, he made himself our friend. Our four-hundred-year-old friend. □

# Joe Mitchell's Secret

by Roy Blount Jr.

UP IN THE OLD HOTEL  
and Other Stories  
by Joseph Mitchell.  
Pantheon Books, \$25.00.

IF I COULD play around with time, I would make myself alive and literate on that week in 1940 when I could flip suspensefully through the latest *New Yorker* (whose table of contents in those days was minimal), come upon a piece titled "Lady Olga," savor its first sentence ("Jane Barnell occasionally considers herself an outcast and feels that there is something vaguely shameful about the way she makes a living"), scan its first paragraph, jump ahead a number of pages to the byline, and exclaim:

"Oh, glory. Joseph Mitchell has profiled a bearded lady."

I did have the pleasure, in 1964, of devouring fresh out of that magazine Mitchell's series of articles about Joe Gould, a bizarre Greenwich Village character whose literary pretensions and hand-to-mouth subsistence Mitchell had first chronicled, more briefly, in 1942. Gould had continued to pester Mitchell over the years, in person or as a kind of specter (Gould sometimes referred to himself as Professor Sea Gull, and did eerie sea gull imitations that no one who heard them ever forgot), until Gould's death in a mental hospital. The closing revelation of this series was something Mitchell alone had been in a position to discover: that the fabled trove of notebooks in which Gould claimed to have recorded years and years of many people's talk, his life's work, his "Oral History of Our Time," had never in fact existed.

Except for his Gould articles collected in a book, *Joe Gould's Secret* (1965), Mitchell has published nothing since. He hasn't even allowed his four long-out-of-print collections to be reissued. For twenty-eight years his

fans have been hearing that he continues to come to work at *The New Yorker*, and wondering what he's up to. We still don't know, but now we do have *Up in the Old Hotel*, a welcome one-volume edition of Mitchell's collected works: the collections (*McSorley's Wonderful Saloon*, *Old Mr. Flood*, *The Bottom of the Harbor*, and *Joe Gould's Secret*), seven pieces not included in those books, and a brisk introduction in which Mitchell, now in his eighties, confides little more than that he has always been inclined toward "graveyard humor."

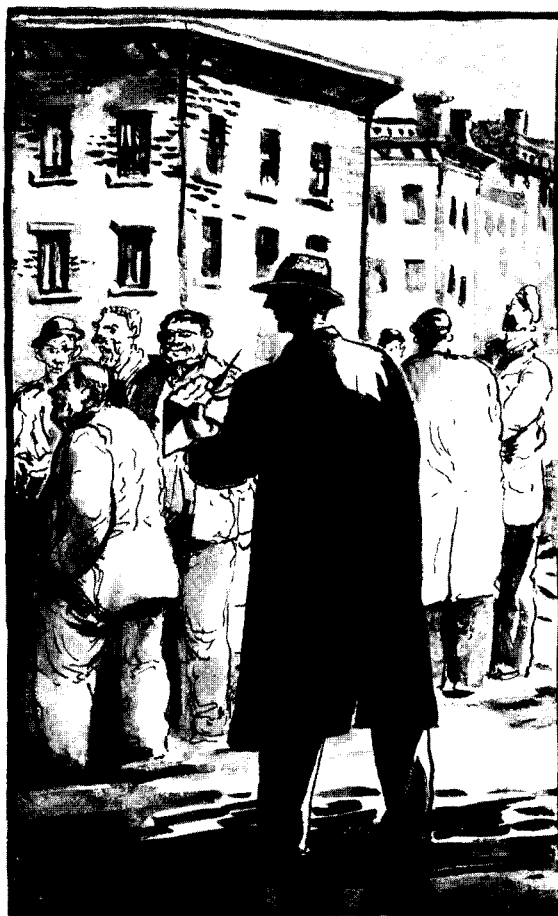
"No matter how fat and sassy you may be," proclaims a street preacher in a 1943 piece titled "A Spism and a Spasm," "you're living every second on the lip of the grave." The people Mitchell honored tended to derive enormous energy from that precariousness, to sing at great length from that lip. *Up in the Old Hotel's* title piece concerns the boarded-up remnants of a long-abandoned hotel above Sloppy Louie's (now lamentably refurbished) restaurant. Mitchell and Louie venture up there and find—well, I won't spoil the details for you. They shudder and go back down. As it happened, that

piece came out in 1952, the year Joe Gould was institutionalized for good.

J. D. Salinger, the other living *New Yorker* writer who stopped publishing in the mid-sixties, has remained in print and—thanks to his reclusiveness—has appeared sporadically in the news. A. J. Liebling, Mitchell's friend and fellow celebrant of drink, food, and raffishness, stopped writing in 1963, because that is when he died; but Liebling is still a familiar author and a journalistic legend. Mitchell has become dismayingly obscure, except to those of us who are old enough and interested enough in a certain line of writing (he has been credited as a pioneer of the so-called New Journalism, but that suggests an inappropriate trendiness) to regard him as a master.

"PEOPLE DON'T laugh at clowns anymore but they want to see them around," a circus official told Mitchell in 1940. If necessary, as a worst-case scenario, I was prepared to salute Mitchell on that basis when I began to read this volume, after not having actually looked at his stuff in some time. But his richly specific, levelly related sketches of mostly New York but sometimes outlying folk and ways—Mohawk high-steel workers, Gypsy swindlers, waterfront rat exterminators—are still funny, fluid, authoritative, tangy, and affecting. Five or six of this book's thirty-seven pieces are not marvelous (to use a word that I have never used before and that Mitchell would probably not be caught dead using). The rest are. I can't do them justice by quoting from them, because their best passages are built up to at length, but here is a description of Looba, the wife of Johnny Nikanov, whom Mitchell identified in 1942 as one of "at least one dozen gypsy kings" in New York:

Looba is tall, gaunt, sad-eyed, and austere; in profile she looks exactly like the old Indian on Indian-head nickels. She goes to sleep at sundown and seldom gets up before 10 A.M., but she is constantly yawning, stretching, and grunting. Looba smokes a pipe. She is extremely irritable. Johnny says that she rarely refers to him by name; instead, using Romany, she calls him a ratbite, a





sick toad, a blue-bellied eel, a black-yolked egg, a goat, a bat, a policeman, a gajo [a non-Gypsy], and various other loathsome things. He doesn't mind. "A gypsy woman that don't scream half the time, something is wrong with her," he says. "Screaming is their hobby."

A vigilant female or Gypsy reader today might find that portrait invidiously objectifying. A reader who is abreast of current food-chain consciousness might shudder at "All You Can Hold for Five Bucks," Mitchell's 1939 study of old-style New York testimonial steak dinners, in which utensil-disdaining, greasy-to-their-ears gourmands merrily put away many, many animals' worth of steak and chops and kidneys while sloshing down gallons of beer. A reader who is up-to-date on dependency might have problems with all the drinking in these pieces. Many of Mitchell's favorite characters are zestfully bibulous, or else so eloquent in their demonizing of rum as to seem inversely intoxicated by it. Then there is the testimony of Mr. Flood, Mitchell's composite Fulton Fish Market character, who at his ninety-fifth birthday party reflects as follows:

"I was lying in bed the other night . . . and I got to thinking about death and sin and hell and God, the way you do, and a question occurred to me. I wonder what man committed the worst sin in the entire history of the human race. The man that invented whiskey, he's the one. When you stop and think of the mess and the monkey business and the fractured skulls and the commotion and the calamity and the stomach distress and the wife beating and the poor little children without any shoes and the howling and the hell raising *he's* been responsible for down through the centuries—why, good God A'mighty! Whoever he was, they've probably got him put away in a special brimstone pit, the deepest, red-hottest pit in hell, the one the preachers tell about, the one without any bottom." He took a long drink. "And then again," he continued, "just as likely, he might've gone to heaven."

One of Mitchell's great gifts is for mixing humor with references to genuine misery while avoiding that great source of decay in comedy: facetiousness. A writer today could not present a Mr. Flood without shoring him up as regards substance-abuse awareness;

but I would bet money that Mitchell's termagants, gluttons, and toppers will outlast—if not indeed overwhelm the scruples of—any particular stripe of contemporarily fish-eyed reader.

**S**O WHAT HAS kept Mitchell silent since he put quits to the matter of Joe Gould in 1964? To see why Mitchell may not be inspired to write about contemporary New York, all you have to do is compare the old Fulton Fish Market, whose organic redolences Mitchell ventilated so well, with the deathly touristic South Street Seaport that incorporates what is left of it today. But there are other reasons why Mitchell's style of reporting is no longer, *o tempera, o mores*, state-of-the-art.

A couple of years ago I was asked to write the introduction to a reissue of one of Liebling's books. I took the occasion to ask Mitchell how his and Liebling's heyday differed from today.

"Back then," Mitchell said, "if you developed a character, the papers would mention him, but he was, you might say, your character. Nowadays fourteen different television programs would take him away from you, promise to pay him something—he'd wind up with about twelve dollars out of it. They just wear out and use up a character. Also, if you try to interview a character today you find that half the things they say they *heard* on television. Most of the quotes you hear today are pretty thin."

Also, Mitchell noted, "the disposition to sue wasn't as rampant then as it is now."

The quotations Mitchell delivered were so long and rich as to take leave of naturalism. They stretch credibility rewardingly and so far as I know unimpeachably (in his introduction Mitchell says which of his pieces are fictional and which not), but probably not in a way that reporters today, who tend to use tape recorders defensively, can get away with. As we have seen in the case of Janet Malcolm versus Jeffrey Masson, the outraged psychiatrist she had profiled in *The New Yorker*, the question of fashioning text from transcript has become profoundly vexed.

There is another reason why characters aren't what they used to be: an honest writer today cannot avoid registering personality differently. Odd ducks today tend to fall under various sociological or psychological headings. They belong to marginalized groups

for whom something should be, and probably isn't being, done. That bearded ladies are now preventable is a development no decent person can regret. I submit that the case of Joe Gould carried Mitchell reluctantly toward such thinking.

Twenty-four of the pieces in this book were published from 1938 to 1942, the year Joe Gould entered Mitchell's life. Only thirteen—many of them, to be sure, among his best—appeared thereafter. Not content to be a one-piece character, Gould appropriated Mitchell's office as his mailing address, came painfully close to letting down his mask with him, and made Mitchell feel guilt and disgust. Mitchell's tone in *Joe Gould's Secret* is marred by uncharacteristic self-consciousness and exasperation.

Everyone who got to know the smelly, shamelessly freeloading Gould eventually dismissed him as impossible. Mitchell put up with a lot more from him than anyone else did. I don't think it is being fanciful to suppose that Gould wore Mitchell out. For one thing, Gould when drinking could talk even Mitchell under the table. More unsettling, Gould turned out to be a bad character for Mitchell's purposes. Pathetic. Dysfunctional.

Mitchell's style embraces austere comic, independently cranky types. It renders downright inspirational their transcendence of hard times, of conventional people's scorn, and of their own intimations of mortality. In the 1942 profile Gould comes through as such a type. But in the end, unlike any other of Mitchell's leading characters, he dies as most people do today: disintegrated and in the hands of o-logists. Mitchell—who identified uncondescendingly with a hardheaded bearded lady, an unshakable religious haranguer, a rather unappealing but redoubtable child prodigy, and any number of fishwives, doomsayers, and cranks—couldn't seem to forgive the mortal weakness of his fellow conflicted writer. Professor Sea Gull, the messiest and most rounded person in this book, may have deconstructed Mitchell's sense of character.

If that is so, Mitchell's decades of reticence are a tribute to his integrity. And *his* oral history does exist, in *Up in the Old Hotel*, a book that should continue to inspire reporters who hope abidingly, as I do, to celebrate great talk of all kinds and to register such resound-

ing mementos of historical orality as the one Mitchell espied on a hotel wall in 1944, a yellowed photograph of

Buffalo Bill and some Indians in fringed buckskins eating lobsters at a family table in the dining room. Around the margin, in a crabbed hand, someone has written, "Col. Buffalo Bill and 1 doz. red Indians just off the Boston boat, stayed three days, big eaters, lobster every meal, up all night, took the place." □

## Brief Reviews



**TO SLEEP WITH GHOSTS** by G. F. Michelsen. Bantam, \$21.50. The narrator of Mr. Michelsen's expertly written novel is Samuel Kimbu, citizen of a nameless country on the east coast of Africa. Kimbu is a dutiful Christian and a qualified ship's officer, educated in the United States but, owing to a piece of bad luck, stuck ashore as "Assistant Chief Inspector Railway and Harbor Customs" at a dismal little port some miles from nowhere. There is no chief inspector, as is only to be expected in a country controlled by a single political party whose corrupt bigwigs import Mercedes by the platoon while rural farmers barely avoid starvation. Naturally there is—or is thought to be—a dissident guerrilla force up in the hilly province from which Kimbu originally came and where his relatives still live fairly well, thanks to his salary. Kimbu cannot afford to quit a job he hates under a government that he privately despises, and when the authorities and the local CIA man demand that he turn spy and hunt down alleged rebel gun-runners, he has no choice but to try. The spy hunt is as tense and chancy as such ventures ought to be, involving sinister waterfront types, inept disguise, fierce seas, and a fat passenger adrift on the deck in a puddle of melted lard. There is no shortage of action, excitement, or sharp characterization in Mr. Michelsen's story, but its basic pur-

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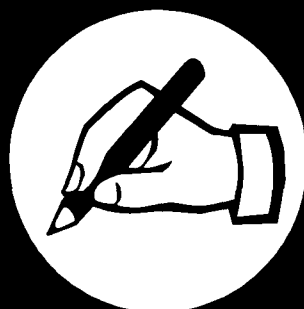
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pose lies well beyond entertainment. Kimbu's country represents a modern Africa where traditional beliefs linger without their traditional meanings and indigenous social systems have been superseded by the worst systems and products of the West. It is "limbo land, the in-between country, . . . lost between dead histories and alien cultures" that it is "destined to inherit." Mr. Michelsen's political analysis is not new, but it could hardly be more eloquently and effectively translated into fiction.

## THE REPORTER WHO WOULD BE KING

by Arthur Lubow. Scribner's, \$25.00. Richard Harding Davis may be no more than a vague name today, but in his turn-of-the-century time he was a beau ideal—athlete, social lion, best-selling author of smart fiction and amusing travel books, and, most of all, war correspondent. He followed Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders up San Juan Hill, and if, as his biographer explains, it was not really San Juan Hill, neither was Bunker Hill really Bunker. Davis's adventures and his numerous backstage misadventures are interesting and very much of a time when, as Davis himself realized, fast communication systems were making the old-line war correspondent who went in with the troops a dangerous nuisance if not an actual aid and comfort to the enemy. One need not share Mr. Lubow's belief that Davis could have written significant novels if he had not hustled the money he always needed through fashionable hackwork. Everything the author quotes indicates that Davis was, in fact, doing the best work of which his essentially ingenuous mind was capable.

## TASTES OF PARADISE by Wolfgang Schivelbusch.

Pantheon, \$25.00. Mr. Schivelbusch begins his "Social History of Spices, Stimulants, and Intoxications" with the medieval passion for pepper, but stops short of serious consideration of the modern addiction to cocaine and its ilk. Along the route the historian finds normally overlooked connections between fads and finance or rages and religion. If coffee became the drink of choice in northern Europe, he reasons, it was because developing capitalism required a clear head. If chocolate became the preference of the Catholic south, it was because it provided nourishment on fast days. The text leaps

from apparent trivialities like the proper manipulation of a snuff box to such large themes as the grim commercial depredations known as the Opium Wars. The argument is frequently unexpected and always engaging.

## PRINCESSE OF VERSAILLES by Charles Elliott. Ticknor & Fields, \$24.95.

Marie Adelaide of Savoy was married at age twelve to her distant cousin Louis, duc de Bourgogne, grandson of Louis XIV and heir, after his lackluster father, to the throne of France. The little princess from Savoy (where her father, controlling a crucial pass, made himself a sporadic political annoyance) delighted the aging Sun King and enlivened a court that under the influence of Madame de Maintenon had lapsed into musty piety and ritualized boredom. Mr. Elliott quotes lavishly from contemporary, probably sincere, tributes to Marie Adelaide's charm, which was unfortunately of the sort that depends on personal manner and direct contact. It does not appear in such of the princess's letters as survive. It cannot, in short, be effectively re-created by her biographer. What Mr. Elliott can recreate—or, rather, describe—are the intrigues and festivities and extravagant costumes that occupied the court and the military failures that shadowed the sinking of Louis's once arrogant sun. The result is a "Life" in which the well-drawn setting becomes more important than the central figure.

## UNDERSTANDING THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS: A Reader From the Biblical Archaeology Review edited by Hershel Shanks.

Random House, \$23.00. Regardless of whether one is seriously concerned about the origin (were they Essene, were they not?) or connections (were they allied to the Sadducees, were they not?) of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the often testy essays in this collection provide fascinating, exasperating, and even comic information about the archaeological protocol and scholarly dog-in-the-mangerism that have kept much of "the greatest manuscript discovery of the twentieth century" unpublished, and therefore virtually undiscussed, for more than fifty years.

**ANCESTRAL VOICES by Etienne van Heerden.** Viking, \$21.00. The Moolman family, the subject of Mr. van Heerden's obliquely prophetic novel, is so large



and, with its blue-eyed African cousins, so complicated that the book begins with a pedigree that is followed by a glossary of South African terms. The story is less impenetrable than these arrangements suggest. For one thing, many of the people on the family tree are dead, and one soon adjusts to the periodic intrusions of their ghosts, because Mr. van Heerden's theme is the death of a Boer dynasty and, by implication, of white racial dominance in South Africa. Isolation, ideological rigidity, and a deteriorating water supply have reduced the proud and formerly prosperous Moolmans to financial limitation and one unsuitable male heir. The death of that boy provides such contemporary action as this odd, intricate novel contains, for the tale shifts back and forth between the observations of the magistrate sent to investigate the affair and the chorus of ghosts who explain the intransigent clannishness that led to it. If the Moolmans cannot be what founder Abel intended them to be, they will be nothing. The magistrate, a somewhat overdone character, remains baffled. The reader does not. With climate, training, and genetics against them, the Moolmans will go. The predominantly African *Skaamfamilie* ("shamefamily," *vide* glossary) will survive.

**PIERO DELLA FRANCESCA** by Ronald Lightbown. Abbeville, \$95.00. The painter Piero della Francesca was born in northeastern Tuscany in either 1406 or 1412 and died in 1492, after a lucrative career covering a number of cities. His family were well-to-do merchants prominent in local affairs, and it may have been the business background that gave Piero a taste for mathematics leading to study of the new science of perspective. In his old age he wrote (or dictated) treatises on perspective, finance, and geometry. He also sued at least one patron for unpaid fees. It appears that little else is known about the artist. Mr. Lightbown's text therefore concentrates on his work, discussing media, pigments, religious iconography, and above all the subtle shifts of perspective the painter employed to create the illusion of realistic space by unrealistic means. The illustrations are generous and, of course, impressive, for Piero was a most impressive master.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams

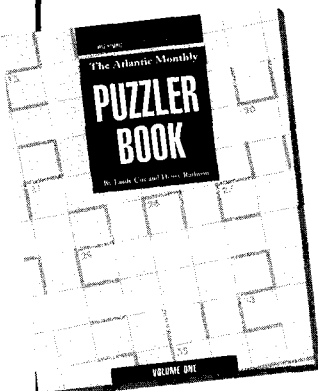
## Answers to the July Puzzler

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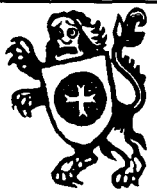
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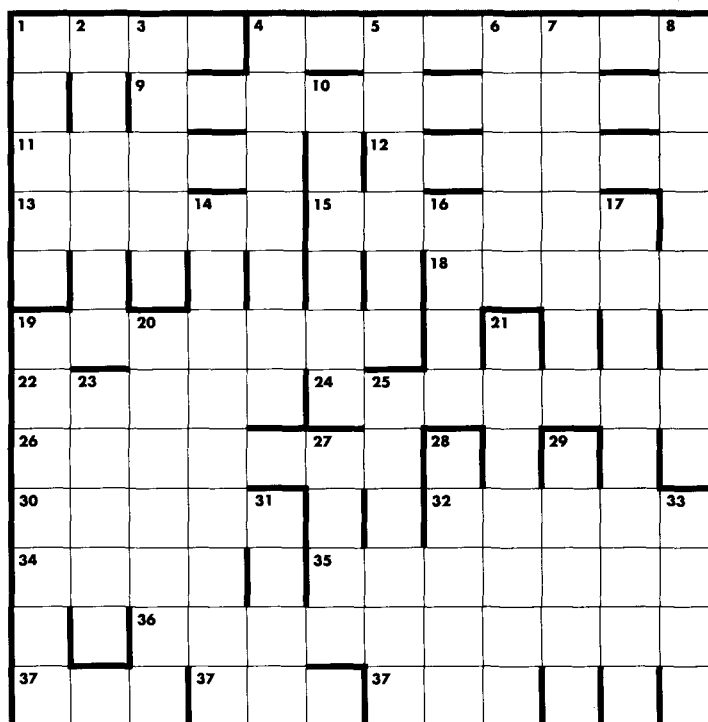
# THE PUZZLER

BY EMILY COX AND HENRY RATHVON

## LITERAL INTERPRETATION

Solvers will find that eleven of this puzzle's clue answers will not fit into the diagram unless they are treated literally. Five clue answers are capitalized.

*The solution to last month's Puzzler appears on page 101.*



### ACROSS

1. Rock in recording disheartened? (5)
4. Fat-skinned swine left on a vessel (8)
9. Bracelet's back with diamonds again? (5)
11. Bob blended red and purple and blue (5)
12. After *Five-O*, Orson's somewhat lacking in character? (9)
13. Bear right at the rear whirlpool (5)
15. Liberate judge for the second time? (6)
18. Shorebird taken in by a tardy substitute (9)
19. In this pan is hashed tongue (7)
22. Makes stupid low-grade coverings for domes (5)
24. Receivers of images trainee developed (7)
26. Mailer returned to southern, fiery state (7)
30. Spreads love in "Cheers" (5)

32. Plateau quakes—L.A.'s gone, devoured (5) (*two words*)
34. Was still facing left, holding medium headwear (4)
35. Speed forces sign to be adopted by Mass Transit Authority (7)
36. End of item I ran wrong on the page (10)
37. Kennedy has advance court divided (9)

### DOWN

1. Police collaring cross Egyptians (5)
2. Chuck keeps place empty, half-dressed? (7)
3. Get nude after starting exercise (5)
4. Slowpoke turned around near Africans (7)
5. Show about butchered bovine (6)
6. Little bird fouled towel (5)
7. Wind playing around the French plane's wing part (7)

8. Ruby holds stanza back (8)
10. The sound of someone damning a computer light (6)
14. Opinion expressed about one tune overturned (9)
16. Insane Democrat near the rear (4)
17. Monsieur, sad to say, catches quiet dogs (9)
19. Outside London art gallery, staff turned (7)
20. Ex-ump I'd badly confused (7) (*two words*)
21. Made outside of British gun swell (7)
23. Count takes in a track race (5)
25. Fabulous birds held up by alien guide (6)
27. Afternoon is over, idiot (4)
28. Former First Lady—one in 1966 musical (5)
29. Money judgment's sound (5)
31. Rocky seas for a potential letter carrier (4)
33. Apartments' soft spots (4)

**NOTE:** The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 745 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass. 02116.



# WORD WATCH

BY ANNE H. SOUKHANOV

**creep defense** *noun*, a legal defense strategy based on the premise that a defendant who has been accused of a sexual assault is widely known to be sexually aggressive, and therefore that one who dates him assumes certain risks knowingly: "That [Mike] Tyson had a bad reputation is well known. Tabloids called him a 'serial buttocks fonder,' and his own attorneys employed what has become known as the 'creep defense': Tyson was so crude that his dates had to expect he would want sex" (*Washington Post*).

**BACKGROUND:** Defense lawyers in several celebrity trials in recent years have attempted to turn their clients' notoriety to advantage. The *creep defense* failed, of course, to persuade a jury earlier this year that the former world heavyweight boxing champion Mike Tyson should be exonerated of charges of rape and deviate conduct. Jurors were similarly unmoved by the *tough bitch defense*, or *bitch defense*, offered in the 1989 trial of Leona Helmsley for tax evasion. Helmsley's attorney argued that his client was so mean-tempered and so deeply hated that her employees had falsified the records in question, either so that they could pay bills without having to deal with her or to create a criminal case against her.

**emotional literacy** *noun*, the knowledge needed to understand the nature of violence and stress and to handle crises and settle arguments nonviolently: "With teen-age suicides, homicides and pregnancies increasing, some educators have begun to give courses in 'emotional literacy'" (*International Herald Tribune*).

**BACKGROUND:** The words *literacy* and *illiteracy*, originally used specifically in connection with reading and literature, have recently been applied to other bodies of knowledge as well. Examples include *computer literacy*, *geographic literacy*,

*Here are a few of the words being tracked by the editors of The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (Houghton Mifflin), now in its third edition. A new word that exhibits sustained use may eventually make its way into the dictionary. The information below represents preliminary research.*

and *Cultural Literacy*, which was the title of a 1987 book laying out a myriad of facts and ideas that all knowledgeable Americans were said to need to be familiar with. Courses in *emotional literacy* encourage children to reveal and come to terms with the stress and violence they experience. Such courses use role-playing, art therapy, discussion, and essay writing, and can be tailored for any level from kindergarten through high school.

**full Cleveland** *noun, slang*, a middle-aged male tourist to Florida who has a sunburned head; sports a white belt, white pants, white patent-leather shoes, and a colorful polyester shirt; and hails from the Midwest: "You get everything from Linda Evangelista, fresh from the Milan collections . . .," Ms. [Tara] Gilani [a Miami

writer] said, 'to what I call a *full Cleveland*'" (*New York Times*).

**BACKGROUND:** *Full Cleveland* is one of many geographic eponyms—a genre that includes such well-established terms as *Buffalo wings*, *chicken Kiev*, *Bronx cheer*, *Denver boot*, *Acapulco gold*, *Lyme disease*, and *New York minute*. It designates certain members of the so-called *white-bread*, *white-belt*, *polyester* culture in the United States.

**Shelter-Pak** *trademark*, used for a hooded and belted coat that doubles as a sleeping bag: "The demand for *Shelter-Paks* on the street is overwhelming" (*New York Times*).

**BACKGROUND:** Students in the Survey of Apparel course at the Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science have over the years developed special products for people with special needs. In 1990 thirty students

in the course collaborated on the *Shelter-Pak*, designed for the homeless. One side of the garment is wool, the other waterproof nylon. In warm weather it can be folded into one of its own deep pockets and carried like a backpack or used as a pillow. The *Shelter-Pak* comes in dark colors, and it has no buttons, zippers, or other closures that might prevent a person under attack from escaping quickly.

**Xer** *noun*, one of the 41 million people born from 1961 to 1971—that is, at the end of the Baby Boom generation—who have been variously characterized as practical and hardworking; unsettled and bewildered; in constant need of stimulus and variety; and often discontented, especially with the values of the previous generation. Also called *twentysomething*. "Xers are obsessed with the houses they can't afford, and instead of engaging with the world, they retreat: either mooching off Mom and Dad or marginalizing themselves in . . . 'McJobs'—'low-dignity, low-benefit, no future' positions in the service industry" (*Newsday*).

**BACKGROUND:** This term first appeared in the 1991 novel *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*, by Doug Coupland (then 29). The book contains a glossary of terms used by or about Xers, such as *bleeding ponytail* (an aging Baby Boomer who has sold out and longs for his hippie youth), *air family* (the false sense of community often found in a conventional office environment), *veal-fattening pen* (a fabric-coated, easily disassembled office cubicle assigned to junior staff members), and *down-nesting* (a recent trend in which parents move into smaller quarters in order to discourage the return of grown children, or *boomerang babies*—a group previously described in this column, and one that seems to include a large number of Xers).



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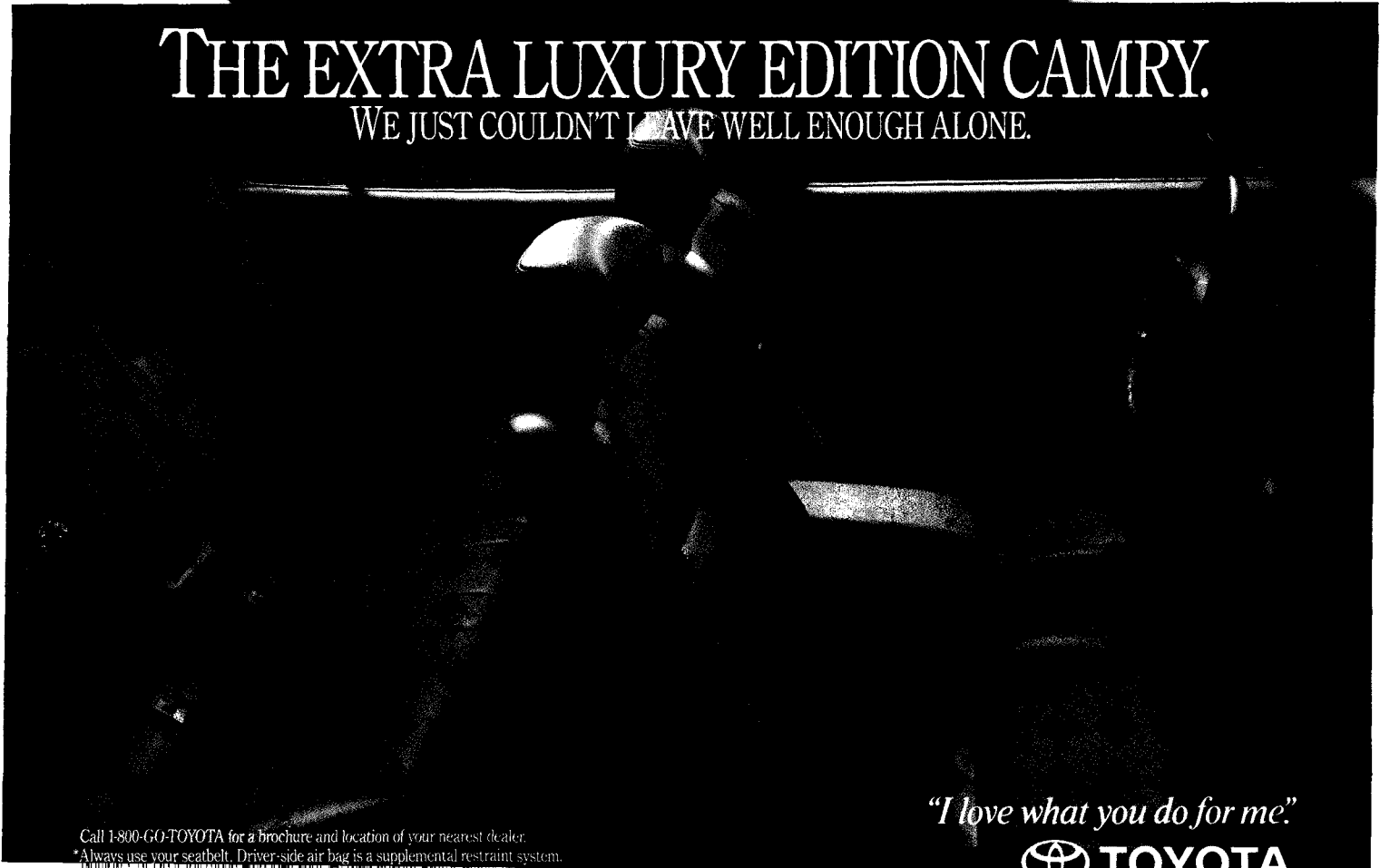
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